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AN INVESTIGATION OF PASTORAL CARE AS EXEMPLIFIED  
IN THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF RICHARD BAXTER WITH  
A CONSIDERATION OF ITS RELEVANCE FOR TODAY

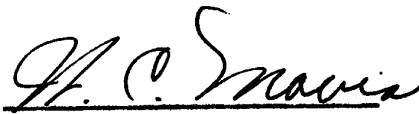
by

John Sanders Pearsall

A Thesis Submitted to the  
Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of  
The Requirements for the Degree of  
MASTER OF THEOLOGY

Major Subject: Pastoral Service

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In charge of Major Work



Second Reader

Asbury Theological Seminary  
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May, 1953

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

For many years there has been evidenced an increasing interest in the subject of pastoral care. This has been most clearly seen in the increasing amount of literature concerning it which has appeared during the past fifteen or twenty years. In this literature extensive efforts have been made to set forth the various concepts and practices of pastoral care as related to the findings of the more recent disciplines, notably psychology and sociology. Very little, however, has been done by way of intensive consideration of the subject as exemplified in the lives of some of the truly great pastors of the past.

#### I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study to make an intensive investigation of the subject of pastoral care as exemplified in the life of the Reverend Richard Baxter of Kidderminster, England, and to interpret the information thus obtained in the light of its relevance for today. To adequately accomplish this purpose it was necessary to reach the following objectives: (1) to determine the principles and practices of pastoral care as

exemplified in Baxter's life and ministry and (2) to determine what relevance his principles and practices have for today.

Importance of the study. Benjamin Disraeli, the eminent British statesman and novelist, has been credited with the following remark, "The more extensive a man's knowledge of what has been done, the greater will be his power of knowing what to do."<sup>1</sup> In view of the truth of this statement it is important that new or rediscovered information of an historical nature be brought to light concerning pastoral care.

This is particularly true in view of the fact that there is an actual dearth of pertinent historical literature. To the knowledge of the investigator, only three fairly recent books of a definitely historical nature have been published on this subject, and two of these are general in scope and thus cannot attempt to treat extensively of any one man.

This study becomes even more important in view of the fact that Baxter has been recognized recently as one of the most outstanding pastors in all church history.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles F. Kemp, Physicians of the Soul (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), p. ix.

Charles F. Kemp has recently written of him, "The story of Richard Baxter of Kidderminster is a record of one of the greatest efforts in the pastoral ministry ever made in the history of the church."<sup>2</sup>

Viewpoint of this study. A further consideration is the fact that the largest portion of the recent literature in this field has been produced by those representing the liberal wing of Christianity, and thus has been approached from that viewpoint; whereas little has been done from the viewpoint of the orthodox evangelical Christian. It was the purpose of the investigator to approach the problem from this latter viewpoint. It was believed that this factor alone was sufficient to justify the study.

This viewpoint, in brief, holds that the essence of the gospel consists mainly in its doctrines of man's sinful condition and need of salvation, the revelation of God's grace in Christ, the necessity of spiritual renovation, and participation in the experience of redemption through faith.<sup>3</sup> These beliefs are based upon the conviction that the Holy Scriptures were written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit

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<sup>2</sup> Charles F. Kemp, A Pastoral Triumph (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), p. 3

<sup>3</sup> "evangelical," Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1949), p. 285.



and thus represent the revealed, infallible word of God and are the final and absolute authority in matters of faith and practice. In relation to this last statement, Karl Burger has written that the question of orthodoxy now is "whether Christianity is to maintain itself as the religion of revelation, or is to lapse to a mere phase of the general evolution of religious history."<sup>4</sup>

## II. ORGANIZATION AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

Organization. Following the "INTRODUCTION" is the chapter which sets forth the pertinent factors relating to Baxter's life and the times of which he found himself a part. Particular stress has been placed on those factors which contributed more significantly towards the character of the man, and thus of his work.

The next two chapters have treated respectively of (1) Baxter's general concept of the work of the pastor and the basic principles which undergirded his work; and (2) the methods and techniques which he used in the application of pastoral care to his parishioners. This second chapter

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<sup>4</sup> Karl Burger, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy," The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Samuel M. Jackson, editor in chief (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950), VIII, 278.

is largely a matter of deduction from Baxter's instructions to other pastors as to the conduct of this work, because few primary or secondary source materials were located which revealed what he actually did in the various situations with which he was confronted. This did not in any way jeopardize the investigation, however, as ample evidence warrants the conclusion that he quite literally practiced what he preached.<sup>5</sup>

The last two chapters have treated respectively of (1) a consideration of his principles and techniques as applicable today, and (2) a summary setting forth the conclusions reached by this investigator.

Limitations. Although Richard Baxter was a man of tremendous and varied accomplishments (J. M. Lloyd Thomas has written of him, "No man of his day was so distinguished in so many spheres.")<sup>6</sup> ---writer, preacher, controversialist, pastor, among others---this investigation was limited in

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Baxter, The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter: with a Life of the Author and a Critical Examination of his Writings by the Rev. William Orme... (London: J. Duncan, MDCCCXXX), Vol. I, footnote b, p. 118.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Baxter, The Autobiography of Richard Baxter, being the Reliquae Baxterianae Abridged from the Folio (1696) with Introduction, Appendices & Notes by J. M. Lloyd Thomas (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., MCMXXV), p. xvii.

so far as practicable to only those aspects of his work which were concerned in some way with his concept and practice of pastoral care. Thus, for instance, his vast literary output while at Kidderminster is referred to in order to indicate the time handicap under which he performed his pastoral labors.

Also, in the investigator's opinion, all of Baxter's important principles and techniques of pastoral care were found to have been amply illustrated in the larger aspects of his work. Thus, in order to avoid useless repetition, some of the minor aspects of his work either have not been included in this report at all, or have been but briefly mentioned.

### III. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Although a large number of works are available concerning Baxter's life and work, most of them give but scant attention to his pastoral work at Kidderminster, and this in spite of the fact that he always considered his pastoral work to have been the most important part of his labors and the source of his "greatest fruits of comfort."<sup>7</sup> This limited treatment has been due mainly to the fact that very

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<sup>7</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, I, 27.

little information has been available concerning this aspect of his work at Kidderminster. Most authors have been restricted to the approximately twenty pages of his autobiography in which he sets forth in very concentrated form the general facts of one of the most prodigious pastoral labors in the history of the church. The exceptions consist of the most recent (1924) life of Baxter by Frederick J. Powicke,<sup>8</sup> which drew upon some hitherto unused materials which he found in the Baxter manuscripts of Dr. Williams' Library, Gordon Square, London,<sup>9</sup> and Charles F. Kemp's recent (1948) small volume, A Pastoral Triumph,<sup>10</sup> which concerns itself almost exclusively with Baxter's Kidderminster ministry and with relating that ministry to the pastoral ministry of today. This latter book is in many ways parallel to the work accomplished in this investigation, but the two are not synonymous inasmuch as they have been approached from different viewpoints, as mentioned earlier.

It should be noted that the most comprehensive treatment extant on the life and works of Baxter is the twenty-

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<sup>8</sup> Frederick J. Powicke, A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter 1615 - 1691 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, [Preface dated 1924]), 326 pp.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Kemp, op. cit., 120 pp.

three volume set prepared by William Orme. The first volume of this set was written by him and consists of 799 octave pages (exclusive of Index, a portion of which was missing from the available volume) which in two parts treats, firstly, "The Life and Times of Richard Baxter" and secondly "The Life and Writings of Richard Baxter." The remaining volumes consist of Baxter's works as compiled by Orme. This set, particularly volumes I and XIV, the latter of which contains Baxter's The Reformed Pastor, contributed most largely to this investigation. Of this latter book John T. McNeill has written:

The Reformed Pastor called forth the plaudits and gratitude of many ministers of the time, and has been much used since. It affected the view of the pastor's task held by such leaders as Spenser, Doddridge, Wesley and Spurgeon. For Protestant ministers, no other book quite ranks with it; its appeal and influence are due alike to its originality, its tone of urgency, and its skillful use of traditional stuff.<sup>11</sup>

Powicke's book was uniquely useful because, as mentioned above, it contained materials, especially some correspondence, which had not previously been used by any, to the general impression and understanding of Baxter, it did reveal some small sidelights which are of interest and pointed up more specifically some things which otherwise

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<sup>11</sup> John T. McNeill, A History of the Cure of Souls (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), p. 267.

could only have been gained by inference.

#### V. DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

Pastoral care. Since this investigation has been concerned first and foremost with Baxter's own conception and application of pastoral care, it is his definition of the term that is of first importance. This definition is scriptural, simple, and all-inclusive. He simply quoted, on the first page of *The Reformed Pastor*, Act 20:28,

Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.<sup>12</sup>

This text was the basis for the entire argument and appeal set forth in the above mentioned book. After devoting a considerable number of pages to the necessity and methods of taking heed to one's self, Baxter then began the discussion of what he considered to be involved in taking heed to all the flock. This, he wrote, consists in

a very great care of the whole and every part, with great watchfulness and diligence in the use of all those holy actions and ordinances which God hath required us to use for their salvation.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, XIV, 45.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

From the above it is immediately apparent that Baxter's definition was such that it included every aspect of the minister's work and was not confined to work only with individuals, as is the trend today. This latter trend is well illustrated in the recent writings of Paul B. Maves, who has affirmed:

Pastoral care is work with individuals and their families. It is the shepherding ministry which seeks out specific persons and attempts to reconcile them to God and to relate them meaningfully to their fellow men in a face-to-face relationship.<sup>14</sup>

This latter statement shows quite clearly the more restricted, modern view of the work involved in pastoral care. That such work is most assuredly a major part of the correct view, even today, is evident from the dictionary definition of the term "pastoral-- . . . 2. Relating to the care of souls, or to the pastor of a church; . . ."<sup>15</sup> However, inasmuch as the common usage of words and expressions determines their meanings, there can be no advantage gained in assigning an unaccepted meaning to a term simply because it may be the more correct view historically. Thus, for all intents and purposes one would today use the words "Christ-

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<sup>14</sup> Paul B. Maves, "The Church's Senior Members," Pastoral Care (J. Richard Spann, editor; New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, MCMLI), p. 130.

<sup>15</sup> "pastoral," Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1949), p. 615.

ian ministry" in referring to the total work which Baxter considered to be included in the "pastoral care" of his parishioners.

One inherent advantage in the use of the words "pastoral care" in referring to the entire work of the ministry lies in the fact that it emphasizes the individual, or person-centered, attitude that should prevail regardless of the number to whom the pastor at any one time might be ministering. This idea will validly carry over even into the organizational and administrative work of the pastor, and will lend direction and force in these areas where it might otherwise be lacking. Thus, in considering all of his work as but varying aspects of his total role as shepherd over his flock, the modern pastor will be more likely to maintain the personal touch and interest which has always been characteristic of great pastors.

## VI. REFERENCES

The most useful sources employed in this investigation were volumes I and XIV, dealing respectively with Baxter's life, times, and writings, and "The Reformed Pastor," of Baxter's Practical Works by William Orme; Powicke's Life of Baxter; Baxter's Autobiography edited by J. M. Lloyd Thomas; and J. Richard Spann's recent book,



Pastoral Care.

Many other sources were consulted as has been evidenced by the footnotes and bibliography.

## CHAPTER II

### THE LIFE AND TIMES OF RICHARD BAXTER

#### I. THE TIMES IN GENERAL

Richard Baxter lived through seventy-six years of the seventeenth century, one of the most stirring periods in the annals of history. It was this century which witnessed the fighting of the Thirty-Year's War in central Europe; the landing of the Mayflower at Plymouth Colony; the publishing of Francis Bacon's Novum Organum; the examining of Galileo for heresy by the papal tribunal; the publishing of Descartes's Discourses of Method; and the painting by Reubens and Rembrant of many of their most significant works. It was this same century which, as it rounded its mid-point, witnessed the rising and falling of the Cromwells as Lord Protectors of England and the subsequent re-establishing of the monarchy under the infamous Charles II. A little later it saw Spinoza completing his Ethics, Milton his Paradise Lost, Bunyan his Pilgrim's Progress, and yet later John Locke completing his Essay on Human Understanding. It was also this same century which beheld the making of such great names in the physical sciences as Newton, Hooke, and Boyle.

In large measure, however, the seventeenth century is noted, particularly in English history, for its having

been a period of almost continuous religious and political turmoil and confusion. The religious struggles on the continent had soon found expression in England where they created "a period of strife, chaos and uncertainty in the midst of crowded and rapidly shifting scenes and events."<sup>1</sup> The struggle between Rome and the Established Church still smouldered and burst into occasional flame. But the great struggle of the period was between the Established Church and the heterogeneous body of Nonconformists, who sought either to reform the Established Church and continue their worship within her confines, or to obtain a complete separation from her and thus have complete freedom to worship as they pleased. Moderate Nonconformists, including Baxter, held the first view whereas the more radical ones held to the second view. As the Established Church was under civil control, religion and politics were inextricably bound together. Thus the religious confusion and division was expressed in the political life of the land even as the political difficulties also found expression in the contemporary religious life. In the hands of those in political power, religion was often prostituted to political

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<sup>1</sup> Charles F. Kemp, A Pastoral Triumph (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), p. 12

expedience; while those in positions of religious authority similarly used political power for their own private ends.

That the local church should quite accurately reflect the general tenor of the times, is not at all surprising. Drunkenness, ignorance, and immorality were to be found everywhere, including those of highest estate among even the regularly constituted clergy. As a consequence the bulk of the people knew little of real religion, and cared less.

In High-Ercall [near where Baxter was born], there were four readers in the course of six years; all of them ignorant, and two of them immoral men. At Eaton-Constantine, there was a reader of eighty years of age, Sir William Rogers, who never preached; yet he had two livings, twenty miles apart from each. His sight failing, he repeated the prayers without book, but to read the lessons, he employed a common labourer one year, a tailor another; and, at last, his own son, the best stage-player and gamester in all the country, got orders, and supplied one of his places. Within a few miles round were nearly a dozen more ministers of the same description: poor, ignorant readers, and most of them of dissolute lives.<sup>2</sup>

## II. PREPARATION

Birth and early environment. Richard Baxter was born at Rowton, near High-Ercall in the county Shropshire, on the 12th of November, 1615. His mother was Beatrice Adeney

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Baxter, The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter with a Life of the Author and a Critical Examination of his Writings by the Rev. William Orme. . . (London: J. Duncan, MDCCCXXX), I, 2.

of the same place, and it was here that he spent, with his maternal grandfather, the first ten years of his life. His father was a freeholder having a moderate estate, but because of having been addicted to gaming in his youth, the property was so encumbered with debt that it was only through much frugality and care in later life that he was able to disencumber it. Thus, Richard though not of mean birth, was born into a home in which he would for many years know the pinch of near-poverty and the distresses contingent thereto. There was one factor, however, which did more than offset all of the apparent disadvantages of his early home life, and that was the genuine conversion of his father. This had occurred at about the same time as had Richard's birth, and had been brought about "chiefly by the reading of the Scriptures, as he had not the benefit of Christian association, or of the public preaching of the Gospel." That this conversion was genuine is apparent from the great change which was manifested in his life. Where heretofore he had spent so much time in gaming and being a good fellow among the local gentry, he was now reproached by those same people as a Puritan and hypocrite. Whereas formerly there had been little, if any, talk of religion in the household, there was now serious conversation about God and the life to come. Where previously the Sabbath had been spent in dancing and

shouting in the public streets, the time was now spent in quietness, meditation, and the study of God's word. Truly the grace of God had wrought a mighty change in the heart of Richard Baxter of Eaton-Constantine.<sup>3</sup>

Nor were these changes without effect, for from a child the son Richard showed unusual propensity towards things religious. It was reported by his father "that he would even then reprove the improper conduct of other children, to the astonishment of those who heard him." His own later references to the troubles of conscience which he experienced because of boyhood sins such as lying, stealing fruit, levity, pride, and disobedience to parents are another indication of this precocious and fortunately-continued interest in religion.<sup>4</sup>

Education. Baxter, though truly one of the remarkable and learned men of his time, suffered from a lifelong feeling of inferiority because of his lack of formal education. Furthermore, such education as he did have was of such a character as to have been an insurmountable handicap except to the hardiest of souls. From six to ten years of age he was under the four successive curates of the parish. Two

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 2,3.

of these never preached, and the other two, who were the more learned, drank themselves into beggary and then left. At ten years of age he went to his father's home where the blind old man of eighty, heretofore mentioned, was parson. Here one of this man's curates was Baxter's principal school-master. Previously he had been a lawyer, but hard drinking had driven him from that profession, and he had turned curate literally for a piece of bread. He preached only once while Baxter was under his care, and even then he was drunk! Baxter's next instructor, who, he tells us, "loved him much," was a grave and eminent man who expected to be made a bishop. He was so busy talking against the Puritans, however, that during the two years in which Baxter was under his tutelage, he never gave him one full hour's instruction.<sup>5</sup>

Of his next instructor, Mr. John Owen--not the Puritan divine but master of the free-school at Wroxeter--Baxter speaks more respectfully. It was to this man that he was chiefly indebted for what little classical instruction he did receive. Not only did Owen school him as best he could, but, having fitted him for the university, he wisely recommended that he study privately rather than enter the university. Owen well knew the low scholastic and spirit-

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 3,4.

ual conditions then prevalent in the great universities of England, however he was not so well acquainted with the character of the man to whom he recommended that Baxter be sent. Mr. Richard Wickstead, chaplain to the Council at Ludlow, was allowed by the king to take in just one pupil. Naturally, under such conditions, he would be expected to devote considerable time to his instruction. Such, however, was not the case, for Mr. Wickstead was in[terested solely in gaining preferment for himself, and this he sought to do by the customary methods of playing politics with his superiors and continually speaking against the religion and learning of the Puritans. The only advantages, which Baxter enjoyed while with him were the rather extensive library and plenty of time to make good use of the same. Thus ended Baxter's early schooling.<sup>6</sup> Of this Orme has written:

Considering the great neglect of suitable and regular instruction, both secular and religious, which Baxter experienced in his youth, it is wonderful that he ever rose to eminence. Such disadvantages are very rarely altogether conquered. But the strength of his genius, the ardour of his mind, and the power of his religious principles, compensated for minor defects, subdued every difficulty, and bore down with irresistible energy every obstacle that had been placed in his way.<sup>7</sup>

Spiritual progress. Fortunately the progress of

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Loc. cit.



Baxter's religious character did not suffer quite the handicaps of his learning. The convictions of his childhood were strongly revived at about fifteen years of age by reading a little work called "Bunny's Resolution", which had been written by a Jesuit named Parsons and later had been expunged and adapted for Protestant use by Edmund Bunny. Concerning this period Orme has written:

Previously to this he had never experienced any real change of heart, though he had a sort of general love for religion. But it pleased God to awaken his soul, to show him the folly of sinning, the misery of the wicked, and the inexpressible importance of eternal things. His convictions were now attended with illumination of mind, and deep seriousness of heart. His conscience distressed him, led him to much prayer, and to form many resolutions; but whether the good work was then begun, or only revived, he never could satisfactorily ascertain.<sup>8</sup>

Another work which he obtained at this time and which was of much use to him was The Bruised Reed by Dr. Richard Sibbs. This book revealed to him more clearly the nature of the love of God, and of the redemption of Christ, and also gave him a much clearer understanding of the debt which he owed the Redeemer. Three of Perkins' works--On Repentance; Living and Dying Well; and On the Government of the Tongue--which he read during this same period also were of very much

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

help to him.<sup>9</sup>

No such helpful instruction was found at his confirmation, however. When about fourteen years of age he went with a group of boys to Bishop Merton for this rite. The bishop "asked no questions, required no certificate, and hastily said, as he passed on, three or four words of a prayer, which Baxter did not understand."<sup>10</sup> From the preceding account it would appear that about the only personal influence for good which had been brought to bear upon the early life of Baxter was the example of his father. Without question, the ecclesiastics of the day did more to hinder than to help. Truly it was a period of low estate in religion!

Providential Deliverances. God, however, was not so slack concerning this chosen vessel of his. Although there seemed to be no man of the church whom He could use to help young Richard on his way, He who is ruler over all could still from time to time so order the affairs of this life as to impress upon him the fact of Divine love and mercy toward him. This he accomplished for Baxter, as for many

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<sup>9</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

others, by bringing to pass in the earlier, more formative years of his life several incidents which in themselves seem hardly noteworthy, and yet which made an unforgettable and indelible impression upon both his mind and his character.

The first of these occurred during his residence at Ludlow Castle with Mr. Wickstead. The best gamester in the house undertook to teach him something of the very popular art of gaming. In either the first or the second game, Baxter was so hopelessly bested that towards the end his opponent wagered a hundred to one against his winning, laying down ten shillings to Baxter's sixpence. Under the circumstances it was impossible for Baxter to win except by getting one cast of the dice very often. "No sooner was the money down, than Baxter had every cast that he wished; so that before a person could go three or four times round the room the game was won." He was so astonished at this that he believed that the devil had had the command of the dice, and had done this to entice him to play. In consequence he returned the ten shillings and resolved never to play again.<sup>11</sup>

In a similar vein Baxter relates in his autobiography several other instances in which he considered himself to

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<sup>11</sup> Loc. cit.

have been marvelously and providentially preserved from serious harm. On one occasion he was going home again into the country, about Christmas day, when there was a very severe frost followed by a long-continued snow. The going was so rough that it was necessary for him to "frost-nail" his horse two or three times a day. On the way he met a heavily loaded wagon in such a narrow place that the only way he could pass it was by going up on the side of the bank, whereupon the horse's feet all slipped, the girths broke, and Baxter was thrown directly in front of the wagon's wheel.<sup>12</sup> Baxter later wrote: ". . . it pleased God that suddenly the horses stopped without any discernible cause till I was recovered; which commanded me to observe the mercy of my protector."<sup>13</sup>

Another instance which he recorded occurred at seventeen years of age when he was out riding "on a great unruly horse for pleasure." They were in a field of high ground along one side of which was a deep-set lane somewhat hidden behind a hedge. The horse suddenly took the bit in his

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<sup>12</sup> Richard Baxter, The Autobiography of Richard Baxter being the Reliquae Baxterianae Abridged from the Folio (1696) with Introduction, Appendices & Notes by J. M. Lloyd Thomas (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., MCMXXV), p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> Loc. cit.

teeth and began running alongside the hedge. Unexpectedly he turned aside and leaped over the hedge into the deep lane. Baxter recorded the result as follows:

I was somewhat before him at the ground, and as the mire saved me from the hurt beneath, so it pleased God that the horse never touched me, but he light with two feet on one side of me and two on the other, though the place made it marvellous how feet could fall besides me.<sup>14</sup>

That he continued to experience such deliverances is further evidenced in his autobiography where he groups together several such instances at the beginning of the section in which he details his work and success while at Kidderminster. Among these he chronicled deliverance, in apparent answer to prayer, from a gold bullet which he had swallowed to cure his ailments and for which he had taken "clysters and purges for about three weeks," none of which had stirred it. Another instance involved a "great hot-mettled horse" which reared up and, his hind feet slipping from under him, fell with his full weight upon Baxter's leg, "which yet was not broken, but only bruised." The wonder lay in the fact that the accident occurred in an area which was paved with large stones. Another time, as he sat in his study, three or four of the highest book shelves directly over his head broke under the weight of his

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, pp. 13, 14.

"greatest folio books." They fell down on every side of him, but only one struck him, and that upon the arm. Baxter has written of the incident, "the weight and greatness of the books was such, and my head just under them, that it was a wonder they had not beaten out my brains." The last instance to be mentioned by him concerned a fall from a "high place" which had not resulted in any serious injury, the marvel being that his brains had not been dashed into pieces because of the severity of it. He closed the section in characteristic fashion with the words, "All these I mention as obliged to record the mercies of my great Preserver to his praise and glory. . ."<sup>15</sup>

Decision to enter the ministry. Shortly after returning from Ludlow Castle, Baxter found his old schoolmaster, Owen, dying of consumption. Lord Newport thereupon requested Baxter to take charge of Owen's school until it should appear whether Owen should live or die. He kept this about a quarter of a year, until relieved by Owen's death. By now he had determined to enter the ministry, and accordingly he placed himself under Mr. Francis Garbet, then minister of Wroxeter, for further instruction in theology.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 76,77.

<sup>16</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, I, 7.

Hindered by illness. With him he read logic for about a month, after which he had to give up his studies for the better part of two years because of the onset of a violent cough, with spitting of blood, and other symptoms of consumption.<sup>17</sup> Baxter's attitude towards this sickness is revealed in the following quote from Orme's "The Life and Times of Richard Baxter."

These symptoms continued to distress him for two years, and powerfully tended to deepen his religious feelings. . . . He became more anxious about his eternal welfare, entertained doubts of his own sincerity, and questioned whether he had any spiritual life whatever. He complained grievously of his insensibility; 'I was not then,' he said, 'sensible of the incomparable excellence of holy love, and delight in God; nor much employed in thanksgiving and praise; but all my groans were for more contrition, and a broken heart; I prayed most for tears and tenderness.'<sup>18</sup>

During this period he derived much comfort and instruction from Ezekiel Culverwell's Treatise on Faith, as well as from some other good books. Mr. Garbet and a few other excellent men were also the means of much comfort and instruction to him.<sup>19</sup> Of the results of this period of suffering and being at the very gates of death, Orme has written:

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<sup>17</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted from Orme in loc. cit.

<sup>19</sup> Loc. cit.

The apparent approaches of death on the one hand, however, and the smittings of conscience on the other, were the discipline which, under gracious influence, produced the most valuable results. They made him appear vile and loathsome to himself, and destroyed the root of pride in his soul. They restrained that levity and folly to which he was, by age and constitution, inclined. They made this world appear to him as a carcass without life or loveliness, and undermined the love of literary fame, of which he had before been ambitious. They produced a higher value for the redemption of Christ, and greater ardour of devotedness to the Redeemer himself. They led him to seek first the kingdom of heaven, and to regard all other things as of subordinate and trifling importance. The man who experienced such benefits from the divine treatment, had reason to rejoice, rather than to complain of it; and so did Baxter.<sup>20</sup>

Baxter's general state of health. Throughout practically all of his long, useful life, Baxter not only suffered from consumption, but also with an almost unbelievable number of various other disorders. He was literally diseased from head to foot. His eyes often were so sore and painful that he could scarcely endure the dimmest light. His stomach was flatulent and acidulous. He suffered from violent rheumatic headaches. His nose bled in prodigious amounts, and his blood in general was so thin and acrid that it oozed out from the points of his fingers, often making them raw and bloody. He also suffered from a dropsical condition which caused large and painful swellings in

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted from Orme in loc. cit.



his lower extremities. Although his physicians, of which he had very many, called it hypochondria, he called it premature old age.<sup>21</sup> Is it any wonder that he was inclined to be a bit short-tempered at times, and that he was occasionally fretful and impatient of correction? The remarkable thing is that he did not give way to indolence and trifling, or give up entirely and pass on to an early grave.

Decision to give up the ministry. In view of his physical condition and the fact that his parents were not anxious that he enter the ministry, Baxter, in 1633 at the age of eighteen, was persuaded by Mr. Wickstead to give up studying for the ministry, and instead to go to London and try his fortune at court. This he did. Less than two months, however, of being entertained on the Lord's day with a play instead of a sermon, and hearing little preaching except that which was against the Puritans, was more than enough. Thus, upon learning that his mother was very ill and desired him to come home, Baxter left court and returned to the country. It was on this trip back, just fresh from the worldliness, license, frivolity, and immorality of the court, that he met with the experience of being providential-

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 13,14.

ly preserved from the wagon's wheel. He arrived home to find his mother in a veritable agony of pain, which endured for several months until death released her.<sup>22</sup>

Final decision. Baxter's mind was now more than ever impressed with the importance of the Christian ministry. He was also impressed with the idea, which long continued with him, that his own life was to be very short, and thus that he must enter the ministry as soon as possible in order to save as many as possible.<sup>23</sup>

Entering the ministry. Shortly thereafter Baxter received an opportunity to teach at Dudley and at the same time to preach in some nearby destitute places. This suited him admirably as he was not yet disposed to enter into the full pastoral connection. On accepting the position, he went to Worcester where he was ordained by Bishop Thornborough and licensed to teach the school at Dudley. Baxter preached his first public sermon in the upper church of Dudley.<sup>24</sup>

Beginning Nonconformity. Until about this time Baxter had been a Conformist both in principle and practice.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 14,15.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 18,19.

He had been maintained and strengthened in this position by the facts that: (1) his acquaintances were almost without exception Conformists, albeit unusually serious ones; (2) practically all of his reading had been done on that side; and (3) the only Nonconformist scholar with which he was acquainted was much inferior to the Conformists around him, most of whom were men of some learning and ability. Thus he had been led to think that the principles of the church-men were strong and that the reasonings of the Nonconformists were weak. It is evident that he had not come to the place of individual examination of the principles involved. However, about his twentieth year he became acquainted with several zealous Nonconformist ministers whose fervent piety and excellent way of life profited him greatly. Upon learning that these were the people being so assiduously persecuted by the bishops, he began to re-evaluate his position and soon felt persuaded that those who silenced and troubled such men could not be followers of the Lord of love.<sup>25</sup>

During his stay of approximately a year at Dudley, Baxter began to seriously ponder some of the more individual problems of nonconformity. This resulted in his definitely becoming nonconformist in his attitudes towards: (1) sub-

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 16-18.

scription; (2) the use of the cross in baptism; and (3) the promiscuous giving of the Lord's supper to drunkards, swearers, and all who had not been excommunicated by a bishop or his chancellor.<sup>26</sup>

Further nonconformity. His next position was in Bridgnorth, the second town in Shropshire, where he acted as assistant to Mr. William Madstard, whom he described as a "grave and severe divine, very honest and conscientious; an excellent preacher but somewhat afflicted with want of maintenance, but more with a dead-hearted, unprofitable people." Here Baxter had a very full congregation to preach to, and was freed from all of those practices against which he had scruples. It was here also that he met with his first taste of persecution for being a Nonconformist. This concerned the Et-caetera oath and led not only to his resolution never to subscribe it, but also to his determination to examine more fully the nature of episcopacy. For his stand concerning the oath he was threatened with expulsion. This, however, was not then carried out.<sup>27</sup>

This oath caused a large number of good clergymen to

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

join the ranks of the Nonconformists, as also did the extremely barbaric treatment afforded those, ministers and otherwise, who opposed prelacy and some of the wordly and sinful things which it either openly countenanced, or at most did nothing to oppose--e.g., Sunday masquarades, plays, gaming, the gamebook, et cetera. The punishment in many cases was so severe as to consist of suffering the loss of both outer ears, having the nostrils slit, the forehead branded, being publicly whipped (often times at a cart's tail in the streets), being fined several thousand pounds, and being perpetually imprisoned.<sup>26</sup> That such treatment should be accorded by a supposedly civilized nation is hardly thinkable; how much less so when done in the name of the church and Christianity!

### III. FIRST KIDDERMINSTER MINISTRY

Call to Kidderminster. Baxter remained at Bridgnorth about one and three-quarters years, after which he removed to Kidderminster, the place which his name was to make immortal. The townspeople there had become so dissatisfied with their vicar that they had prepared a petition against him in which they had represented him as being an ignorant

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 25,26.

and weak man who preached but once a quarter, was a frequenter of alehouses, and was sometimes drunk. His curate was no better as he was a common tippler and drunkard, a railler, and also a trader in unlawful marriages. The vicar well knew the truth of their representations, but being desirous of retaining his living if at all possible, he offered to make a compromise with them. He would release his present curate and allow sixty pounds per annum to a lecturer whom a committee of fourteen of them should choose. This person was to preach when he pleased while he himself would continue to read prayers and do any other part of the parish routine. The townspeople agreed to this, withdrew their petition, and, after trying a Mr. Lapthorn, contacted Baxter with an invitation dated March 9, 1640. Baxter took up his duties at approximately this same date.<sup>29</sup>

'Thus,' says he, 'I was brought, by the gracious providence of God, to that place which had the chiefest of my labours, and yielded me the greatest fruits of comfort; and I noted the mercy of God in this, that I never went to any place in my life which I had before desired, or thought of, much less sought, till the sudden invitation did surprise me,'<sup>30</sup>

First Kidderminster ministry. Of this first ministry

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>30</sup> Baxter, quoted by Orme in ibid., p. 27.

at Kidderminster very little is known other than the facts that it lasted something less than two years and that during that time Baxter suffered some vilification at the hands of drunkards and mobs within the town, and suffered also very much internally with grave doubtings concerning his own faith. He found that he had been spending too much time on the superstructure of Christianity and not enough with the foundations, which latter he began now to most seriously question. The well settling of his own foundations followed this period of doubt and led him to conclude that, "Nothing is so firmly believed as that which hath been sometime doubted of."<sup>31</sup> He saw the hand of God in all these doubtings and troublings and expressed his resulting faith as follows:

And I saw that Christ did bring up all his serious and sincere disciples to real holiness and to heavenly-mindedness, and made them new creatures, and set their hearts and designs and hopes upon another life, and brought their sense into subjection to their reason, and taught them to resign themselves to God and to love him above all the world. And it is not like that God will make use of a deceiver for this real visible recovery and reformation of the nature of man; or that anything but his own seal can imprint his image. . . .<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Baxter, Autobiography, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>32</sup> Loc. cit.

Leaves Kidderminster. After approximately two years, Baxter was forced to leave Kidderminster because of the mounting tension between the Royalists and Roundheads (those favoring the Parliament, or Oliver Cromwell). The county in which Kidderminster was located was overwhelmingly Royalist, while Baxter, though a faithful, vocal, and life-long believer in the monarchy, was more inclined to the side of Parliament. Because of the ignorance of the townspeople (they misunderstood the meaning of a new act passed by parliament concerning images and defacing church property, et. ceters), this tension finally headed in a violent attack on the life of both Baxter and the church warden. Baxter, upon other's advice, immediately withdrew to Gloucester. Upon attempting to return about a month later, and finding feeling still running too high for safety or any profitable work, he sought some other place to work until the wars should be over, a matter which he was naive enough to believe would be settled within the course of a few weeks by means of one more battle.<sup>33</sup>

Period of indecision. The war and the general state of the country bore heavily upon his mind. Thus he spent some little time indecisively.

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<sup>33</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, I, 39-41.



For myself, I knew not what course to take. To live at home, I was uneasy; but especially now, when soldiers on one side or other would be frequently among us, and we must still be at the mercy of every furious beast that would make a prey of us. I had neither money nor friends: I knew not who would receive me in any place of safety; nor had I anything to satisfy them for my diet and entertainment.<sup>34</sup>

Soon, however, he received an invitation to come and live in Coventry and preach to the soldiers quartered there. Baxter later wrote of this,

'The offer suited well with my necessities; but I resolved that I would not be chaplain to a regiment, nor take a commission; yet, if the more preaching of a sermon once or twice a week to the garrison would satisfy them, I would accept of the offer, till I could go home again.'<sup>35</sup>

The war did not end so soon as Baxter and many of his countrymen had expected and hoped that it would. Thus, after approximately one year in the above situation, he decided to visit some of his old friends in Cromwell's army at nearby Naseby Field. Upon spending a night in conversation with them, he found the state of the army much different than he had supposed. Heretical sects were beginning to make excessive headway in the army, and especially among those appointed to places of leadership. It became plainly evident to him that Cromwell's party was intent on

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<sup>34</sup> Baxter, quoted by Orme in ibid., p. 41.

<sup>35</sup> Loc. cit.

doing away with the king and breaking the power and authority of the church at all costs.<sup>36</sup> Orme has quoted Baxter as having written,

'By law or without it, they were resolved to take down, not only bishops, and liturgy, and ceremonies, but all who did withstand them. . . This struck me to the very heart, and made me fear that England was lost by those that it had taken for its chief friends.'<sup>37</sup>

#### IV. MINISTRY TO THE ARMY

Decision to become a chaplain. Baxter believed that the blame for this condition lay heavily upon the ministry for having forsaken the army and continued in an easier and quieter way of life. He especially blamed himself for having rejected an earlier invitation to act as the chaplain to Cromwell's most famous regiment as it was the one from which had come a number of Cromwell's leading staff officers, and who were now the very ones causing the most trouble. In view of this when another invitation to the chaplaincy was tendered him, Baxter promised to consider it and give his answer within a day. The invitation came from Colonel Whalley, an orthodox man, whose regiment was "the most religious, most valiant, and most successful of all the

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 43-45.

<sup>37</sup> Baxter, quoted by Orme in ibid., pp. 45-46.

army." Baxter hastily returned to Coventry, called together an assembly of ministers for consultation and, upon their having unanimously given their judgment for his going, he obtained his release from the Coventry committee which had invited him there, and sent word to Colonel Whalley that, "to-morrow God willing," he would come to him.<sup>38</sup>

Ministry as chaplain. Baxter from the outset experienced difficulty and opposition. It was his hope to be called into some of the top-level conferences where he might get to know personally some of those officers who were being most instrumental in bringing about the increase in heretical views which so disturbed him. However, this hope was not realized in the slightest. Not once was he invited to such a conference, or to meet the officers outside of his own regiment. Cromwell himself remained coolly aloof, even though he knew Baxter personally and had previously invited him to be chaplain of his own regiment. And as for the others in high position, they had no time for a chaplain whose sole interest was in converting them and turning them what were essentially his own religious and political views. Thus, from the beginning his ministry was confined almost

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 46-48.

entirely to the men of his own regiment.<sup>39</sup>

Baxter's time with the army was very largely spent in disputation, for which there was no better fitted man in all of England. Concerning this Orme has quoted him as having written:

'Here I set myself, from day to day, to find out the corruptions of the soldiers, and to discourse and dispute them out of their mistakes, both religious and political. My life among them was a daily contending against seducers, and gently arguing with the more tractable.'<sup>40</sup>

Later he attempted to ferret out those who were the chief instigators of heresy in his regiment and to deal with them individually. He did this by drawing them out in debate in the presence of others and exposing them to ridicule as he bested them with unassailable logic and knowledge. Some of these were so completely bested as to be made into the laughing stock of the entire regiment.<sup>41</sup>

Concern with heresy. Upon the ending of the siege at Worcester, Baxter returned to Coventry to discuss with the ministers his ideas concerning the imminent crisis which he believed would soon occur when Cromwell and his men,

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>40</sup> Baxter, quoted by Orme in ibid., p. 49.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

having won the war, would begin to pull down all that stood in their way, and set up themselves. As this would involve both church and state, he felt that they would be interested in it and desirous of doing something about it. His plan was to return to the army and attempt to lead as many of Cromwell's men as possible away from the dangerous views, both political and religious. This was quite an undertaking; so much so in fact that, from the very nature of the situation, it was obviously doomed to failure. Baxter, however, was not the type to be daunted by any situation so long as it concerned something which he felt to be his duty to perform. Thus, with the ministers' judgment again concurring, though none offered to assist, he planned to return and take up his duties more strenuously than before.<sup>42</sup>

Providential illness. Providence, however, prevented his return to the army. For almost immediately his general condition of poor health became so much worse that he was forced to give up all of his plans and practically take to his bed for almost a half-year.<sup>43</sup> It was during this illness that he wrote the largest part of his most famous work, The Saints' Everlasting Rest. Characteristic of

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 63,64.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

Baxter was his reaction to this turn of events.

'As I perceived it was the will of God to permit them [Cromwell's party] to go on, so I afterwards found that this great affliction was a mercy to myself; for they were so strong, and active, that I had been likely to have had small success in the attempt, and to have lost my life among them in their fury.'<sup>44</sup>

As to his recovery, Baxter wrote:

I have related how after bleeding a gallon of blood by the nose, that I was left weak at Sir Thomas Rous's house, at Rous-Lench, where I was taken up with daily medicines to prevent a dropsy; and being conscious that my time had not been improved to the service of God as I desired it had been, I put up many an earnest prayer, that God would restore me, and use me more successfully in his work. Blessed be that mercy which heard my groans in the day of my distress; which wrought my deliverance when men and means failed, and gave me opportunity to celebrate his praise!<sup>45</sup>

Views on Sectarianism. These last few years had been ones of great toil and disappointment to Baxter. He had laboured ceaselessly while connected with the army, only in the end to see most of his work go for nought. He still was, and remained throughout his long life, a churchman at heart (much as did Wesley, who followed him by about a hundred years), whose desire was to see the established church reformed, cleansed, and purified in order that she might carry on her great and noble work to the very best

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<sup>44</sup> Baxter, quoted by Orme in ibid., p. 65.

<sup>45</sup> Baxter, quoted by Orme in ibid., pp. 99,100.

advantage. Instead of seeing a strengthened and unified church, however, he saw the rise of a number of conflicting and diverging sects. These he vigorously opposed by writing voluminously for the public and by doing all within his power to warn and instruct the people under his ministry, that they might not be led astray into false doctrines, beliefs, and practices. His ultimate reasoning on the matter was that in almost every case the sectarians differed more about words than about things. Thus, if they would but get together and really trash through their differences, they would find them much smaller than they took them to be, and in many cases actually non-existent.<sup>46</sup>

#### V. SECOND KIDDERMINSTER MINISTRY

Call to return. After about five months' confinement at Rous-Lench, Baxter was able to go abroad again, and immediately he went to Kidderminster where "the people again vehemently urged" him to take the vicarage. This he declined to do, but was willing to continue with them in his old lecturer's place, "expecting they would make the maintenance a hundred pounds a year, and a house; and if they would promise to submit to that doctrine of Christ,

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 98.

which" as his minister he "should deliver to them." It is noteworthy that in accepting this arrangement Baxter refused offers to go elsewhere at "many hundred pounds per annum." It is also noteworthy that, in spite of the fact that the agreement was duly drawn up and signed, the people of Kidderminster continuously failed to live up to their part of it. Thus, instead of receiving the hundred pounds per year, Baxter usually received only eighty or ninety at the most; and not once was a house furnished to him, but only some rooms in another's house.<sup>47</sup>

Of the day-to-day events and details of his busy years at Kidderminster, Baxter has, unfortunately, left practically no record. He did, however, leave in his autobiography a very vivid and succinct general account of his labors in that place.<sup>48</sup>

His employments. Before the war Baxter's custom was to preach twice each Sunday, but after his return he habitually preached but once on Sunday, once on Thursday, and as the opportunities arose special occasions. Also, every few weeks, "on one occasion or the other," a day of humiliation would be held.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. 100-01.

<sup>48</sup> Baxter, quoted by Orme in ibid., pp. 115-17.



Following the Thursday lecture it was customary for some of his interested neighbors to come to his house in the evening, at which time one of them would repeat the sermon. Afterwards they would propose any doubts concerning either the sermon or other things which troubled them, whereupon Baxter would resolve their doubts. Prayer, either by one of the visitors, "to exercise them," or by Baxter, was then held after which a psalm was sung to end the meeting.

Baxter's work with youth was nothing less than remarkable, for once a week it was the custom of some of them to meet together privately for three hours of prayer! Besides this there was a regular Saturday night youth group, which met from house to house, for the purpose of repeating the sermon of the previous Lord's day, and to pray and prepare themselves for the following day.

Among the married women he appears to also have had much success, for instead of feasting and gossiping upon the birth of a child, the more religious ones, if able, would keep a day of thanksgiving and praise while soberly feasting together with some of her neighbors.

Among the more important parts of his pastoral work was that of catechising and instructing his people. To this both Baxter and his assistant ultimately gave two days each week, though it was not until several years had passed that

he began it. Between them they took fourteen families each day, with the assistant going through the parish and Baxter having the townspeople come to him. Of this he has related,

'I first heard them recite the words of the catechism, and then examined them about the sense; and, lastly, urged them, with all possible engaging reason and vehemency, to answerable affection and practice. If any of them were stalled through ignorance or bashfulness, I forbore to press them any further to answers, but made them hearers, and either examined others, or turned all into instruction and exhortation. I spent about an hour with each family, and admitted no others to be present; lest bashfulness should make it burthensome, or any should talk of the weaknesses of others. . . . 49

Besides the above-mentioned labors, Baxter also was forced to practice medicine for five or six of the earlier years at Kidderminster. This came about as the result of a common pleurisy which struck the town one year, and as no regular physician was present, Baxter undertook to prescribe for them in order to save their lives. His doing so was not so presumptuous as at first it might seem, because, due to his continual illness, he had consulted with many doctors and doubtless had read quite widely in the field of medicine. His success was such that from then on he was quite literally besieged with patients, so much so that often as many as twenty would be at his door at the same time. He modestly laid this to the fact that he "never once took a penny of

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49 Baxter, quoted by Orme in ibid., p. 116.

anyone," though he added almost immediately that God had so long encouraged him with so much success that finally he could endure it no longer, whereupon he succeeded in procuring a "godly diligent physician" to come and live in the town.

All of the above mentioned labors (except the private conferences with families), including even the preparation and delivery of his sermons, were considered by Baxter to be but his "recreation, and, as it were, the work of his spare hours." His writings were his chief daily labor, especially as he never had a secretary to whom to dictate and thus had to do all of his writing in long hand. Nor did the fact that his sickness took up so much of his time make things any easier for him. Of this Baxter wrote,

'All the pains that my infirmities ever brought upon me, were never half so grievous an affliction as the unavoidable loss of time which they occasioned. I could not bear, through the weakness of my stomach, to rise before seven o'clock in the morning, and afterwards not till much later; and some infirmities I laboured under, made it above an hour before I could be dressed. An hour, I must of necessity have to walk before dinner, and another before supper; and after supper I could seldom study: all which, beside times of family duties, and prayer, and eating, &c., left me but little time to study: which hath been the greatest external personal affliction of all my life.<sup>50</sup>

Now consider the above in the light of what Baxter

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<sup>50</sup> Baxter, quoted by Orme in ibid., p. 117.

wrote during the fourteen years at Kidderminster. First it is noted that he partly wrote and published his "Aphorisms" and "Saints' Rest." Of the remaining works, Orme has compiled a list as follows:

He wrote and published, beside other things, his works on Infant Baptism -- On peace of Conscience -- On Perseverance -- On Christian Concord -- His Apology -- His Confession of Faith -- His Unreasonableness of Infidelity -- His Reformed Pastor -- His Disputations on right to the Sacraments -- Those on Church Government -- And on Justification -- His Safe Religion -- His Call to the Unconverted -- On the Crucifying of the World -- On Saving Faith -- On Confirmation -- On Sound Conversion -- On Universal Concord -- His Key for Catholics -- His Christian Religion -- His Holy Commonwealth -- His Christian Religion -- His Holy Commonwealth -- His Treatise on Death -- And, On Self-denial, &c., &c.<sup>51</sup>

Nor does this complete the list of his activities. Every first Wednesday in the month was the regular monthly meeting for parish discipline; and every first Thursday was the ministers' regular meeting for discipline and disputation. Baxter was almost constantly the moderator for the latter meeting, and as such usually had to prepare a written "determination" for the same, all of which he mentions as his "mercies and delights," and not as his burdens. In addition, every Thursday after the regular lecture he had the company of "divers godly ministers" at his house with whom he spent the afternoon "in the truest recreation,"

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 164.

till the neighbors came in for their regular Thursday evening session of "exercise or repetition and prayer."<sup>52</sup>

During this time it is further noted that he also carried on an extensive correspondence, much of which was of either a controversial or casuistic nature and thus demanded much thought and time in preparation. In addition he also found time to organize, and preside over, a very successful county-wide ministerial association.

His successes. In referring to the successes of this ministry, the Encyclopaedia Britannica has affirmed that, "he accomplished a work of reformation in Kidderminster and the neighbourhood, as notable as any upon record."<sup>53</sup> Baxter has himself written of it, as quoted by Orme,

'In a word, when I came thither first, there was about one family in a street that worshipped God and called on his name, and when I came away, there were some streets where there was not one poor family in the side that did not so; and that did not, by professing serious godliness, give up hopes of their sincerity. And in those families which were the worst, being inns and alehouses, usually some persons in each house did seem to be religious.'<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>53</sup> "Baxter, Richard," Encyclopedia Britannica, 1944, III, 237.

<sup>54</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, I, 118-19.

## VI. LIFE AFTER KIDDERMINSTER

The interests of this paper have been such as to exclude those things which did not pertain to Baxter's pastoral ministry. Therefore, as he never again, after having finally left Kidderminster in 1661, engaged in a settled pastoral ministry, only very brief consideration has been given to the main facts of his life following that period.

Leaves Kidderminster. Baxter left Kidderminster in 1660, probably in April, to visit London. This was for the purpose of effecting a conciliation between the Established Church and the moderate dissenters, of whom he was the acknowledged chief. Such was not then to be effected, however, and Baxter's visit lengthened month after month. During this time he had also been attempting to have the situation at Kidderminster clarified so that he might return and take up the vicarage there, but to no avail. Both the local bishop and the most influential layman of the church were unalterably opposed unless he would agree to conform, which he would not agree to do. Finally, about August, 1661, he went personally to Kidderminster to attempt a settlement, even to the point of agreeing to preach for nothing, but still to no avail. He was allowed to preach but two or three times, after which the pulpit was denied him further.

He preached his last sermon in the parish of Kidderminster at the house of James Boucher, one of his most saintly laymen, from the text "I Chronicles xiii. 3 ('Bring back the ark of God into the city').<sup>55</sup>

Within about two months, he returned to London to continue the fight to have the moderate dissenters retained within the Established Church, but again to no avail. Opposition continued to crystalize against them and finally issued in the passage of the Act of Uniformity on May 19, 1662. Three days afterward, at the great church of Blackfriars in London, he preached his last public sermon and bade farewell to the Established Church.<sup>56</sup>

Marriage. Baxter, now forty-seven years of age, relieved of all of his parish duties and with little remaining to do except to attend to his writing, finally found time to marry. His wife was the former Margaret Charlton of Kidderminster, "a woman like-minded with himself," and with whom he found very much consolation.<sup>57</sup> The beautiful fellowship which they enjoyed together was almost

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<sup>55</sup> Powicke, op. cit., pp. 206-07.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>57</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, III, 237.

the only brightness in the dark and stormy years which followed. And even this was lost to him when, in 1681, she died.

Persecutions. The dark and stormy years had begun immediately following the Ejection of 1662. And from that time to the Indulgence of 1687, Baxter's life was one of almost constant persecution in one form or another. He was dragged to prison for keeping a conventicle at Acton in Middlesex. He was taken up for preaching in London after the licenses granted by the king in 1672 were taken up. He was barred from his newly constructed meeting-house in Oxenden Street, London, after having preached there but once. He was seized in his own house in 1680 and carried away at the very risk of his life; and though he was released and sent home to die, his books and goods were impounded which was a very great blow to him. In 1684 he was three times carried to the sessions house, though so weakened as scarcely to be able to stand, and made to enter into a bond of four hundred pounds for his good behavior.<sup>58</sup>

His worst encounter, however, was with the new Chief Justice, Sir George Jeffreys. In May, 1685, Baxter was arraigned upon the ridiculous charge of having libeled the

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<sup>58</sup> Loc. cit.



church in his Paraphrase on the New Testament. That this was not the real motive, however, is evident from what Orme has reported Charles D. Fox as having written in his History of the Reign of James II. In this he stated that "The real motive was the desire of punishing an eminent dissenting teacher, whose reputation was high among his sect, and who was supposed to favour the political opinions of the whigs."<sup>59</sup> Of the trial itself, the Encyclopedia Britannica avers that it "is well known as among the most brutal perversions of justice which have occurred in England." As a result of it, Baxter, who was by then a very sick old man of seventy years of age, was sentenced to pay a fine of five-hundred marks, to lie in prison until the money was paid, and to be bound over on good behavior for seven years. At the time it was even asserted that Jeffreys proposed that he be whipped at the cart's tail through London. Following this trial Baxter remained in prison for eighteen months, after which the government, in a vain attempt to win him to their side, remitted the fine and released him.<sup>60</sup>

Peace. After his release in 1687, Baxter lived in peace and honor. He continued his preaching and writing

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<sup>59</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, I, 357.

<sup>60</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, III, 237.

almost to the end. He was surrounded by attached friends and revered by the religious world. His saintly behavior, his great talents, and his wide influence, together with his extended age, had raised him to a position of unequalled reputation.<sup>61</sup>

Even during the last few days, as death was approaching, he continued to maintain his clarity of mind, and above all his interest in helping others on to God. He died "on Tuesday morning, about four o'clock, December 8, 1691"<sup>62</sup> Bates said of him in his "Funeral Sermon," that "This excellent saint was the same in his life and death; his last hours were spent in preparing others and himself to appear before God."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>62</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, I, 402.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p. 399.

## CHAPTER III

### BAXTER'S CONCEPT OF PASTORAL CARE

In order for a proper understanding of the practice of pastoral care as exemplified in the life and ministry of Baxter, it is first necessary to consider: (1) his basic concept of the subject and (2) some of the more important general factors which underlie his work. It is the purpose of this chapter to set forth the findings of that part of the investigation.

#### I. GENERAL CONCEPT

Basis for concept. The basis for Baxter's concept of pastoral care was found to be the Scripture verse with which he began his book concerning that subject, Gildas Salvianus: The Reformed Pastor. This was Acts 20:28, which he translated as follows:

Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Baxter, The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter: with a Life of the Author and a Critical Examination of his Writings by the Rev. William Orme. . . (London: J. Duncan, MDCCCXX), XIV, 45.

General concept. In accordance with the simplicity and inclusiveness of his text, Baxter's concept was likewise scriptural, simple, and all-inclusive. It was nothing more nor less than taking quite literally and fully the meaning of the text quoted above. That he believed that much could and should be said concerning the subject is evident from the fact that he expanded its meaning into a book which in Orme's compilation comprises 394 octavo pages. Further evidence of the exhaustiveness with which he treated his subject is seen in the statement which Harry C. Howard has ascribed to Dr. Alexander Whyte. The latter said that he supposed

'that Paul is the only minister that ever lived who could have read Richard Baxter's "Reformed Pastor" without going half mad with remorse, and with a fearful looking for of judgment.'<sup>2</sup>

Baxter held that the text applied to all who are pastors and that it naturally set forth (1) a two-fold duty, and (2) a four-fold motive to enforce it.<sup>3</sup>

The first duty for pastors is that they shall take heed to all the flock. Furthermore, the main work which is

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<sup>2</sup> Harry C. Howard, Princes of the Christian Pulpit, Second Series (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1928), pp. 101-02.

<sup>3</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, XIV, 46.

to be heedfully done for the flock is to feed them, or act as good shepherds for them.<sup>4</sup>

The four-fold motives which enforce this work are these: (1) it is the pastor's office, and thus he is responsible for it; (2) he has been called to it, and by none other than the Holy Ghost; (3) the work is more than worthy, being the oversight of a part of the most excellent and honorable society in all the world; and (4) Christ shed his blood for it.<sup>5</sup>

## II. TAKING HEED TO ONE'S SELF

Those who are already ministers. Baxter held that, even as it appeared in the text, the first duty of the overseer of the flock is to take heed to himself. Indeed, he cannot properly fulfill his obligations to the flock unless he does so. Baxter was so firmly convinced of the necessity and importance of this that he devoted almost half of the book, in some way or other, to the various aspects of this part of the minister's task. Humiliation before God for past failures in properly caring for the flock comprises a very large portion of this treatment, as does also the

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<sup>4</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Loc. cit.

discussion of the ways and means whereby the minister can adequately perform this task.

In general Baxter held that there are three distinct areas in which the minister should made most searching and critical examination. The first of these concerns his own state of grace. Thus, he who would be minister to others must search his own soul to see whether or not a genuine, saving work of grace has been wrought upon it. If it has, he must see that he continues to abide in that state. If it has not, then he must take the necessary steps to see that such does take place. The second concerns such ordering of his life that he might not be living in those very sins which he from the pulpit condemns in others. Not only does Baxter apply this to open, wilful sinning, but also to those small, every-day words, deeds, and attitudes which being seen in the minister's life do but contradict that which he says from the pulpit. The third area concerns that of the minister's preparation. Thus he is exhorted to take heed lest he be unfit for the great employment which he has undertaken.<sup>6</sup> That this employment should require the very best in study, diligence, and preparation is evident from the following statement by Baxter:

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 53-60.

O what qualifications are necessary for that man that hath such a charge upon him as we have! How many difficulties in divinity, to be opened! yea, about the fundamentals that must needs be known! How many obscure texts of Scripture to be expounded! How many duties to be done, wherein ourselves and others may miscarry, if in the matter, and end, and manner, and circumstances they be not well informed! . . . O, dear brethren, what men should we be in skill, resolution, and unwearied diligence, that have all this to do?<sup>7</sup>

Those who expect to be ministers. In the case of one who is newly called to the ministry, or feels that his call lies in that direction, Baxter would have him to also take heed concerning his qualifications for such an important employment. These qualifications he held to be four-fold. First and foremost is the fact that a minister must "heartily love God above all, before he can serve him before all." This is the most basic of all the requirements, for no man can truly be Christian who is not utterly devoted to God, and no man who is not a Christian, so long as he remains such, can do even one part of the work of a Christian minister. Secondly, a minister must actively love the church. He must "rejoice in her welfare, and be willing to spend and be spent for her sake." Thirdly, he must also have sufficient knowledge of the life hereafter that he will have his affections set on it rather than on the things of

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 55-56.

this world. He must "set his heart on the life to come, and regard the matters of everlasting life, above all matters of this present life." Fourthly he must be one who loves righteousness and hates sin.<sup>8</sup>

### III. TAKING HEED TO ALL THE FLOCK

In general. Although taking heed to one's self is of very great importance in the ministry, it is not the part of the work which makes a man a minister, or overseer of a flock. For this part involves the more active aspects of his work and, according to Baxter, consisted in taking

a very great care of the whole and every part, with great watchfulness and diligence in the use of all those holy actions and ordinances which God hath required us to use for their salvation.<sup>9</sup>

From this statement it is very apparent that Baxter considered every aspect of the work of a minister to be a part of his oversight of the flock--a very broad concept indeed. There is, however, one very definite and important phrase included in the above which sets definite and positive limits to what is included in the work, namely,

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 79-80.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 78.



". . . which God hath required us to use. . ." Above all else, Baxter sought to be "scriptural" with regard to his ministry. Thus, if he felt something to be required according to the Scriptures, church discipline being a good example in point, he would insist upon the use of it regardless of those who might oppose him in it, or the outward circumstances which might seem to militate against it.

From the above it is evident that in Baxter's opinion anything which was done either directly or indirectly for the benefit of the flock and/or its individual members was, by definition, a part of the oversight of the flock, and thus of pastoral care. Hence studying, preaching, teaching, public prayer and praise, administration of the sacraments, marriages, funerals, even providing for the collection of the tithes, as well as the more personal aspects of his work, were all a part of the oversight of the flock. This was indeed a broad outlook, but it had much to commend it, especially as it tended to give force and direction to what was essentially a "person-minded" ministry.

#### IV. SOME IMPORTANT FACTORS UNDERLYING BAXTER'S MINISTRY

This student believes that it made a profound impression on Baxter when, at the age of fourteen, he went to

a bishop for confirmation and discovered that he was so little concerned for his eternal welfare that he "asked no questions, required no certificate, and hastily said, as he passed on, three or four words of prayer which [he] did not understand."<sup>10</sup> This investigator also believes that the Spirit of God made much use of this, and other early experiences, to mold Baxter's character and to help make him into one of His most outstanding servants. For Baxter saw all around him the failings of the regular clergy, and at the same time, through his reading of the Scriptures, prayer and meditation, and observation of those few godly ministers with whom he came in contact, the Holy Spirit worked to impress upon him those factors which are of paramount importance to the life and ministry of one who would be a good overseer of his flock. This study revealed that the most important of those factors were the ones which are treated in the following sections of this chapter.

Faith in God. W. Curry Mavis has recently written that the preacher's "passion for souls and faith in God are the bases for a soul-winning ministry."<sup>11</sup> Baxter possessed

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<sup>10</sup> Supra., p. 21.

<sup>11</sup> W. Curry Mavis, "What is Seminary Training?" The Free Methodist, 86:5, April 21, 1953.

both of these to an eminent degree. His faith in God was a peculiarly strong one, especially for his day, as was evidenced throughout all of his mature life and specifically in the strong emphasis which he placed on the use of prayer. Nor was this an intellectual faith only, but even more it was an outstandingly practical one. It is the investigator's opinion that this strong faith was in large measure a direct outgrowth of those experiences in Baxter's life which have already been referred to and to which he ever afterwards looked as having been especially providential in nature.<sup>12</sup> Nor was it to these alone, but also to the large number and diversity of prayers which he had seen answered during his life. Of the many illustrations which might be cited, only two will be noticed here. The first one cites evidence to the fact that such indeed was Baxter's own opinion concerning the matter.

'Shall I therefore forget how often he has heard prayers for me? and how wonderfully he has helped both me and others; my faith has been helped by such experiences, and shall I forget them, or question them without cause at last? '13

The second illustration further confirms this in that

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<sup>12</sup> Supra, pp. 21 ff.

<sup>13</sup> The Life of Rev. Richard Baxter--Chiefly Compiled from his own Writings (New York: The American Tract Society, n.d.), pp. 39-40.

in it he is exhorting the ministers to whom he was writing in The Reformed Pastor to the effect that, "Our whole work must be carried on in a sense of our insufficiency, and in a pious, believing dependance upon Christ."<sup>14</sup>

Passion for souls. The great passion of Baxter's life was his love for souls! Concerning this Davies has written, "It was Baxter's meat and drink, the life and joy of his life, to do good to souls."<sup>15</sup> Everything that he did or said was given force and direction by this compelling urgency to do good to mens souls by helping them on to God. This love for souls quite naturally found its outward expression in his love for people, of whom souls are the vital factor. Concerning this, Baxter wrote:

The whole course of our ministry must be carried on in a tender love to our people: we must let them see that nothing pleaseth us but what profiteth them; and that which doeth them good doth us good; and nothing troubleth us more than their hurt.<sup>16</sup>

The good pastor must love his flock even as does the good shepherd, and must be ready to lay down his life for

<sup>14</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, XIV, 124.

<sup>15</sup> John Hamilton Davies, The Life of Richard Baxter of Kidderminster, Preacher and Prisoner, (London: W. Kent and Co., 1887), p. 125.

<sup>16</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, XIV, 128-29.

them if it prove necessary. Such love cannot be expressed merely in words, but requires rather to be exemplified in deeds and actions. Baxter wrote of this,

To this end the works of charity are necessary, as far as your estate will reach; for bare words will hardly convince men that you have any great love for them.<sup>17</sup>

How Baxter did love those who were under his charge, and especially the poor! He could never, he felt, do enough for them even though he laid out all that he had in order to help them as far as he could. His philanthropy was not a misplaced one, however, which sought but to fill their stomachs with food and cover their backs with clothes. But rather he ever sought to feed their souls with the Word, and the information which could work to their eternal salvation, in order that they might learn to drink from that spring which never fails and be clothed with the beautiful garments of righteousness which shall eternally renew themselves. This was particularly well manifested in his purchasing of Bibles and small religious books and tracts for distribution to the poor; and also in the fact that he was instrumental in sending a number of the poor boys through the university, or to secondary schools. This was not his only way of showing his love for the poor, however, as he early realized that

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

in showing a man that you care for his physical body he will more often and willingly respond to your efforts to care for his soul; thus Baxter practiced medicine for several years and also made it his practice to give something to the very poor to repay them for their time lost from work when they came for catechizing and instruction. With regard to this aspect of the ministry, he wrote, in refutation of those who claimed that they were not able to give to the poor from their small stipend, that: "The man who has anything in the world so dear to him, that he cannot spare it for Christ if he call for it, is no true Christian."<sup>18</sup>

Devotion. Baxter held that one of the great sins among the clergy of his day was at the point of their devotion, both to the Lord and to their work. And he included himself in the statement, which was as follows:

The next sin that I shall mention, that we are lamentably guilty of, is this; we do not so seriously, unservedly and industriously lay out ourselves in the work of the Lord, as besemeth men of our profession and engagements.<sup>19</sup>

That Baxter was not guilty of this sin is evident to anyone who has read the account of his busy and useful life. Concerning this, Kemp has written of him that,". . . in

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

terms of devotion to the pastoral task, Richard Baxter has never been surpassed."<sup>20</sup> This statement is exceedingly strong--it places Baxter right along with Paul and the hardiest of the Church Fathers in this matter--but it is doubtless true. In the investigator's opinion he cannot see how anyone could possibly have given himself more completely to the task than did Baxter. Even in the matter of recreation, he limited himself strictly to that which he found by experience to be the very minimum with which he could maintain bodily efficiency. However, so complete was his devotion and yet so plainly could he see, because of that very devotion, how very much more needed to be done, that he was wont to castigate himself for his failure to do more than was humanly possible, even when unusually blessed of God in his work.

Among many other instructions and exhortations concerning this matter, Baxter told his readers of The Reformed Pastor that, "This work must be managed laboriously and diligently: being of such unspeakable consequences to others and ourselves."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Charles F. Kemp, Physicians of the Soul, A History of Pastoral Counseling (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), p. 45.

<sup>21</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, XIV, 120.

Organization and planning. In this, even as in other things, Baxter was but following the directions laid down in the Holy Scriptures for the proper performance of the duties of an overseer of the flock, thus, by bringing together the heart of several different verses of Scripture, he wrote that "This work must be carried on prudently, orderly, and by degrees. "Milk" must be given before "strong meat." Foundations must be properly laid before the building can be constructed thereon. The whole work must proceed by degrees, as men are able to receive it.<sup>22</sup> This seems to be a most elementary truth. But how often are those in the ministry prone to forget it, and especially those who are more interested in glorifying self and pleasing men than in glorifying and pleasing God.

This latter was not so with Baxter, however. His whole ministry was built around a comprehensive plan which included every member of his flock, every aspect of the work which should be done, and a sufficient organization to effect it. And, true to the Word, he always kept basic things to the forefront. Concerning this he wrote that through the whole course of one's ministry he "must insist most upon the greatest, most certain and necessary things,

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 121.



and be more seldom and sparing upon the rest."<sup>23</sup> This was especially evident in Baxter's preaching and catechising. Only occasionally would he depart from it, and then only for a special purpose such as keeping the members of his flock humble and teachable by adding something in his sermon "Which was above their own discovery, and which they had not known before."<sup>24</sup>

Plainness. This factor is very closely allied to the one which has just been treated, but the investigator believes that it is of sufficient importance to warrant separate consideration. Baxter firmly believed in the plainest possible dealing in everything, and especially when it came to presenting spiritual truth.

All our teaching must be as plain and evident as we can make it; . . . He that would be understood, must speak to the capacity of his hearers, and make it his business to make himself understood. Truth loves the light, and is most beautiful when most naked.<sup>25</sup>

Baxter contended that the hiding of truth, on the pretext of revealing it, through the use of flowery words and ornamental methods, was nothing but hypocrisy. He believed that it was only those who were fearful of reveal-

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<sup>23</sup> Baxter, loc. cit.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

ing their true position, to any except a favored few, who invariably desired to hide their true meaning behind a painted glass, as it were, of highly ornamented, verbose, flowery language. Those who have nothing to hide should have no fear in presenting the truth as clearly and plainly as possible.<sup>26</sup> And such a person was Baxter. For, not only did he have nothing to hide, but he was so consumed with the desire of seeing precious souls saved and edified that he strove with all his power to make the way of salvation as plain and clear as he possibly could.

Recognition of differences. Not only was the plainest of language used by Baxter, but he also always sought to speak to the particular needs of the person or group with whom he was dealing. He of course recognized that all men had certain basic needs, among them being particularly those of conversion and subsequent edification. These latter he rightfully placed in the forefront, having written, ". . . we may well conclude that, the work of conversion is the great thing that we must first drive at, and labour with all our might to effect."<sup>27</sup> That he also, however, recognized individual differences in meeting even this most basic of all

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

needs is evident from the following:

"Alas," wrote Baxter in The Reformed Pastor, "how few men know how to deal with an ignorant, wordly man for his conversion. To get within him, and win upon him; to suit our speech to his condition and temper, to choose the meekest subjects, and follow them with the holy mixture of seriousness and terror and love and meekness and evangelical allurements, O who is fit for such a thing?"<sup>28</sup>

Baxter did not believe that any pastor should content himself with merely knowing whether a particular member of his flock had been truly converted or not, and of how best to deal with him concerning his conversion; but he insisted that one of the cardinal points in the pastoral work was that of so well knowing each member of the flock as to be able to intelligently minister to each one's particular needs. Concerning this he wrote:

We must labour to be acquainted with the state of all our people as fully as we can; both to know the persons, and their inclinations and conversation manner of living ; to know what are the sins that they are most in danger of, and what duties they neglect for the matter or manner, and what temptations they are most liable to. For if we know not the temperament or disease, we are likely to prove but unsuccessful physicians.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Richard Baxter, The Reformed Pastor; or The Duty of Personal Labors for the Souls of Men, Revised and Abridged by Rev. William Brown (New York: The American Tract Society, Pref. 1829), p. 274.

<sup>29</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, XIV, 96.

Earnestness. Baxter was intensely earnest in every aspect of his pastoral work. "We must be," he wrote, "sincerely affectionate, serious and zealous in all our public and private exhortations. . . . To speak coldly and slightly of heavenly things, is nearly as bad as to say nothing of them."<sup>30</sup> He insisted that preachers should "stir themselves up" and preach with all their might. By this he did not mean that they were to be continually yelling and raving in their pulpits, but rather that they should so conduct themselves as to cause men to see that they were in serious earnestness concerning the things about which they were preaching. As for his own practice, Sylvester has written of him in his "Funeral Sermon" that, "When he spake of weighty soul concerns, you might find his very spirit drenched therein."<sup>31</sup> Orme in his analysis of the reasons for Baxter's success, concluded that there were three, among which". . . the simplicity and intense ardour of his preaching demand our notice."<sup>32</sup>

Patience. The last personal factor to be treated in this discussion is that of patience. Baxter conceded that

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 126-27.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted by Orme in Baxter, Practical Works, I, 406.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

he was a man who was "naturally of a discouraged spirit" and that had he preached as much as a full year and not seen some fruits of his work, he should hardly have forborne running away.<sup>33</sup> In spite of this spirit, however, he exercised great patience in his work and insisted that others should do likewise. In The Reformed Pastor he wrote:

We must bear with many abuses and injuries from those that we are doing good for. When we have studied for them, and prayed for them, and besought and exhorted them with all condescension, and spent ourselves for them, and given them what we are able, and dealt with them as if they had been our children, we must look that many should requite us with scorn, and hatred, and contempt, and cast our kindness in our faces with disdain, and take us for their enemies, because we tell them the truth; and that the more we love, the less we shall be beloved. All this must be patiently undergone, and still we must unweariedly hold on in doing good; in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance.<sup>34</sup>

This but reflects the spirit of that real love which "never faileth", but which, in spite of opposition and adversity, continues so long as opportunity is available to seek the highest good for its object. Baxter never begrudged patience, and especially in the case of those who, though trying to the best of their ability, were yet slow to learn. Time after time he would repeat the essentials of the gospel in the most familiar language possible until at last there

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>34</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, XIV, 130-31.

would dawn upon their understanding sufficient of the truth for them to be saved. In an "Epistle Dedicatory" with which he dedicated one of his works on conversion "to the Inhabitants of the Burrough and Foreign of Kidderminster both Magistrates and People," he reminds them of the patience and persistence with which he had dealt with them.

'I believe God, and therefore I know that you must every soul of you be converted or condemned to everlasting punishment. And knowing this I have told you over and over again. . . I have earnestly besought you and begged you to return; and if I had tears at command, I should have mixed all these exhortations with my tears; and if I but had time and strength (as I have not) I should have made bold to have come more to you, and sit with you in your houses, and entreated you on the behalf of your souls, even twenty times for once that I have entreated you. . . . I have told you, and told you a hundred times, with what a face these sins will look upon you in the end. And yet all will not do!'<sup>35</sup>

Summary. This chapter has been concerned with Baxter's concept of pastoral care and some of the basic factors upon which his pastoral-care ministry was built and which made it effective.

It was found that Baxter's concept was simple, scriptural, and all-inclusive and that it was nothing more nor less than taking quite literally the meaning of the Apostle Paul's charge, as found in Acts 20:28, to the elders at Ephesus

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<sup>35</sup> Frederick J. Powicke, A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter, 1615-1691 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, pref. 1924), p. 134.

wherein he instructed them to,

Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.<sup>36</sup>

It was further found that among the more important basic factors underlying his pastoral work the following were most outstanding and have been treated individually in this chapter : a strong and practical faith in God; a genuine passion for souls; and a complete devotion to his work; a through plan and suitable organization for effectively carrying on the work; an unusual plainness of manner and speech in dealing with his people; and a continual and all-pervasive practice of recognizing and dealing with people according to their individual needs. Lastly, there was an intense earnestness which characterized every aspect of his work and served to drive home to his parishioners the urgency of the things about which he was concerned, and to which he was so anxious that they should give heed.

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<sup>36</sup> Supra, p. 54.

## CHAPTER IV

### BAXTER'S PRACTICE OF PASTORAL CARE

Baxter's concept of pastoral care has been treated in the preceeding pages of this report. Thus it has been the purpose in this chapter to give a detailed consideration of the methods and techniques which he used to put that concept into practice. In order to accomplish this objective his work was divided into three main categories as follows: (1) public ministry; (2) ministry to more private groups, including families; and (3) ministry to individuals. Because of their distinctive interest, the two outstanding features of Baxter's ministry, Catechising and Discipline, have been treated separately following the discussion of his ministry to individuals. The chapter has then been closed with a brief summary section.

Procedure. In the research for this project much time was spent in seeking records of actual instances in which Baxter engaged in the various activities of the pastoral care of his parishioners. In the literature which was available, however, such instances were almost completely lacking. The few exceptions noted were references to the treatment of cases of melancholy and also a few instances referring to matters of church discipline. Had Baxter kept



a journal, a wealth of such material would undoubtedly have been available. But such he did not choose to do. Even in his autobiography he gave scarcely a score of pages to his ministry at Kidderminster, though he afterwards referred to that period as that "which had the chiefest of my labours, and yielded me the greatest fruits of comfort."<sup>1</sup> Also it was during this period that he immortalized himself as a "prince" among protestant pastors and Kidderminster as a parish of world renown. Of this Dean Stanley has been quoted as having written,

'There have been three or four parishes in England. . . , which have been raised by their pastors to a national, almost a world-wide fame. Of these the most conspicuous is Kidderminster: for Baxter without Kidderminster would have been but half of himself; and Kidderminster without Baxter would have had nothing but its carpets.'<sup>2</sup>

In view of this shortage of material setting forth actual records of Baxter's work, it was necessary to depend in large measure upon his views of the pastoral office as set

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Baxter, The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter: with a Life of the Author and a Critical Examination of his Writings by the Rev. William Orme. . . (London: J. Duncan, MDCCCXXX), I, 27.

<sup>2</sup> Harry C. Howard, Princes of the Christian Pulpit and Pastorate, Second Series (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1928), p. 88.

forth in his books, The Reformed Pastor. This book was an expansion of an address which he had prepared for a day of humiliation which was kept by the ministers of his county who had subscribed to an agreement for catechising and personal instruction among their parishioners, at their entrance upon that work. Of this book Orme has written,

Baxter was eminently qualified to write on the nature and design of the ministerial office. He had now occupied it for a sufficient number of years, to enable him to speak from his own experience. But independently of this, the manner in which he had discharged the duties of the office at Kidderminster, and the extraordinary success with which it had pleased God to bless his labours, pointed him out to his brethren as the proper person to deliver to them, not an ex cathedra oration, or a formal concio ad clericos, but a pious, earnest, and solemn homily on the onerous duties and responsibilities of the pastoral function.<sup>3</sup>

# I. GENERAL ATTITUDES

One cannot long concern himself with Richard Baxter without coming to the realization that he is dealing with a man who will never suggest to, much less require of, others that they do that which he himself is not willing to do, or has not done to the utmost of his abilities as the need has arisen. Of this Orme wrote,

Baxter's 'Reformed Pastor' may be considered as a full illustration of the practice which he here describes as

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<sup>3</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, I, 554-55.

his own, connected with the principles by which it is recommended and enforced. . . . Those who regard his views of the ministry as impracticable, have only to remember that Baxter, diseased, emaciated, and in deaths oft, exemplified the conduct which he so admirably describes.<sup>4</sup>

In considering Baxter's application of pastoral care, it is noted that first of all he was a man having but one primary motive for all that he did. Orme expressed it as follows:

The gaining of souls to Christ was the only object for which he lived. . . . His ruling and controlling principle, was the love of his Master, producing the desire of a full and faithful discharge of his duty as his approved minister.<sup>5</sup>

Bates in his funeral sermon for Baxter stated the same thing in different words when he said that "it was his meat and drink, the life and joy of his life, to do good to souls."<sup>6</sup>

In the fulfillment of this mission Baxter gave himself completely and without reserve. Nothing connected with it was too small or trivial to invite and command his attention: similarly, anything not connected with it was not powerful enough to turn him from it. He was diligent to show

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<sup>4</sup> Orme, quoted in ibid., footnote b, p. 118.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>6</sup> G. D. Boyle, Richard Baxter (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, MDCCCLXXXIV), p. 96.

himself a workman approved of God. Orme affirmed, "He gave himself to reading, meditation, and prayer; and was wholly in these things."<sup>7</sup> It was this continued and unreserved devotedness that was the grand feature in Baxter's ministerial character, and it was this which accounted in very large measure for his success at Kidderminster.

## II. GENERAL METHOD

Baxter's general method, as has been the case with innumerable other men who have made large successes in their respective fields of endeavor, was to lay great stress on a few leading points which were particularly well adapted to his times and situation, and to build his entire program around them. Orme listed these as, "Awakening preaching, holy example, diligent inspection, with catechising, and the faithful administration of discipline."<sup>8</sup> These were the central features in Baxter's ministry, to which all else was subordinate. It should be noted that, with the exception of the first named item, each of the above named points concerns an individual, or a person-centered ministry,

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<sup>7</sup> Orme quoted in Baxter, Practical Works, I, 556-57.

<sup>8</sup> Loc. cit.

rather than one which is concerned solely with ministry to a large group. This is of utmost importance, because it was Baxter's great stress on work with the individual which contributed most to his success at Kidderminster.

### III. PUBLIC MINISTRY

Prayer. It doubtless appears illogical to place the subject of prayer as first under the heading of "PUBLIC MINISTRY," but such was not the feeling of Baxter. In The Reformed Pastor he wrote:

Prayer must carry on our work as well as preaching; he preacheth not heartily to his people; that will not pray for them. If we prevail not with God to give them faith and repentance, we are unlikely to prevail with them to believe and repent.<sup>9</sup>

Not only did Baxter believe that prayer for one's self as well as for others was necessary to bring about and maintain a proper spiritual attitude, but he also had a profound conviction that both God and Satan worked wondrous things in the realm of the physical. This conviction doubtless grew in large part from those instances in his early life which he ever afterwards looked upon as having been unusually providential.<sup>10</sup> He knew prayer "is the good man's

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<sup>9</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, XIV, 125.

<sup>10</sup> Supra, pp. 21 ff.

only weapon," and was convinced that it is a part of the established order of God's universe. Concerning this, John Davies wrote of him,

The words of Revealed Truth taught the duty and philosophy of prayer, and experience convinced him of its direct advantage. The excessive weakness of his constitution made it his unceasing resort. Gratitude made it his delight.<sup>11</sup>

Baxter himself wrote in his "Dying Thoughts,"

'O how often have I cried to Him, when men and means were nothing, and when no help in second causes appeared; and how often, and suddenly, and mercifully has he delivered me! . . . And wonders have I seen done for others also, upon such prayer, more than for myself; yea, and wonders for the church, and for public societies.<sup>12</sup>

As for Baxter's public prayers, they but showed how much time he spent alone with God; for only one who knew God intimately as Father, and Christ as Lord and Friend could have prayed as Baxter did. Bates writing in his "Funeral Sermon" said of them:

'His prayers were an effusion of the most lively, melting expressions, of his intimate, ardent affection to God: from the abundance of the heart, his lips spake. His soul took wing for heaven, and wrapt up the souls of others with him. Never did I see or hear a holy minister address himself to God with more reverence and humility,

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<sup>11</sup> John Hamilton Davies, The Life of Richard Baxter of Kidderminster, Preacher and Prisoner (London: W. Kent and Co., 1887), p. 122.

<sup>12</sup> The Life of Rev. Richard Baxter, Chiefly Compiled from his own Writings (New York: The American Tract Society, n.d.), pp. 39-40.

with respect to his glorious greatness: never with more zeal and fervency, correspondent to the infinite moment of his requests, nor with more filial affiance in the divine mercy.'<sup>13</sup>

Preaching. Baxter's preaching was characterized by the same ardor as was his praying. Even from the earliest days of his ministry he showed unusual sincerity in both the manner and content of his preaching. He explained this as due to the fact that, because of his many infirmities, he believed that he had but a short while in which to work, and that he did not want to appear empty handed before Christ on the day of judgment. Thus, according to what he wrote in his "Poetical Fragments:"

'He preached, as never sure to preach again,  
And as a dying man to dying men!<sup>14</sup>

In his preaching Baxter always insisted on laying the greatest stress on the great, central truths of Christianity. He well knew that among the great majority of his parishioners, nearly all of whom were woefully ignorant and illiterate, there were very few who could understand the finer points in doctrine and belief. Thus he concentrated almost solely on those things contained in the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and the application of them to the

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<sup>13</sup> Quoted by Orme in Baxter, Practical Works, I, footnote c, p. 407.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 487.

lives of his people. ". . . he saw at the beginning of his ministry that the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. . . contained in wonderful concentration Divine revelation and the whole duty of man."<sup>15</sup> Thus, the life, death, and resurrection of Christ were the topics upon which he based both his home meditations and his sermons.

True to the style of his day, his sermons were very long (seldom less than a full hour) and filled with that type of argument in which division and fragmentation played a prominent part. Each point was broken down into various subpoints, and they in turn were broken down still further. He had the keen, analytical mind that was so much in evidence in those days. To everything the rules of logic were inexorably applied with the result that every aspect of a subject was examined to the point where there seemed to be no further possibilities of enlargement and exploration. This was especially true of the applicatory portions of his sermons, for one of Baxter's strongest points was that of direct application to the actual needs of his hearers. In accordance with this, he also always insisted on using the simplest, plainest language possible. Of this he averred,

'The plainest words are the most profitable oratory

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<sup>15</sup> Davies, op. cit., p. 123.



in the weightiest matters. . . . Simplicity with earnestness is the only style of speaking which becomes the ministry of the Gospel. The one will enable the preacher to convey truth to the understanding, the other will give him command of the heart.'<sup>16</sup>

And yet, in order to keep his hearers from getting puffed up, or thinking that they knew as much as did their teacher, he would usually put something in his sermon which was above their discovery, and which they had not known before, in order to keep them humble and teachable.<sup>17</sup>

Baxter's delivery of his sermons was also motivated by the predominating factor in his life, namely the saving of souls to Christ. This naturally provided a vigor and purpose which was all too often lacking in that day of cold, formal, dead religion. One of the great sins of the ministers of his day he felt lay right at this point--they were too cold and indifferent and would not stir themselves up in the work of the Lord. But how different it was with him. Orme has said of him,

He never spoke like a man who was indifferent whether his audience felt what he said, or considered him in earnest on the subject. His eye, his action, his every word, were expressive of deep and impassioned earnestness, that his hearers might be saved. His was eloquence

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<sup>16</sup> Baxter, quoted by Orme in Practical Works, I, 490-91.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

of the highest order;. . . the eloquence of the most important truths, vividly apprehended, and energetically delivered.<sup>18</sup>

This is not at all to be construed that Baxter spent his time in the pulpit raving, shouting, and storming at his people, but quite the contrary. He has himself written that he "had naturally a familiar moving voice"<sup>19</sup> which he believed was one of the important factors in his success as a minister of the gospel. Thus, his sermons were delivered in what would today be referred to as the "conversational" manner. However, this did not in any way detract from, but rather added to, the intense earnestness with which he spoke and sought to drive his messages home to both the understandings and the hearts of his hearers.

William Bates, who was a long and intimate friend of Baxter, wrote glowingly of his preaching as follows:

In his sermons there was a rare union of arguments and motives, to convince the mind and gain the heart: all the fountains of reason and persuasion were open to his discerning eye. There was no resisting the force of his discourses, without denying reason and divine revelation. He had a marvelous felicity and copiousness in speaking. There was a noble negligence in his style;

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<sup>18</sup> Orme, quoted in Baxter, Practical Works, I, 131.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Baxter, The Autobiography of Richard Baxter being the Reliquae Baxterianae Abridged from the Felio (1696) with Introduction, Appendices & Notes by J. M. Lloyd Thomas (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., MCMXXV), p. 79.

for his great mind could not stoop to the affected eloquence of words. He despised flashy oratory; but his expressions were clear and powerful, so convincing the understanding, so entering into the soul, so engaging the affections, that those were as deaf as adders, who were not charmed by so wise a charmer. He was animated with the Holy Spirit, and breathed celestial fire, to inspire heat and life into dead sinners, and to melt the obdurate in their frozen tombs.<sup>20</sup>

Worship and praise. Baxter believed that a large part of the public ministry of a pastor should consist in leading his people in acts of public worship and praise. Frederick Powicke has reported concerning this, that

In his treatise on 'The right method for a settled Peace of Conscience' (p. 534) he turns aside to exhort his 'Brethren of the Ministry' to preach and teach more in the week so that sermons, or the sermon, on Sunday might be shorter and 'a greater part of' the service and the day bestowed 'in Psalms and solemn Praises to our Redeemer.'<sup>21</sup>

He saw that historically this had been true throughout most of the church until a fairly late date, and that even during his time the Lord's day was still kept as a day of rejoicing and thanksgiving by some of the faithful. By most ministers of his day, however, this had been "much thrust into a corner" with the result that the church was no longer practicing these things as it should. Baxter wrote

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted by Orme in Baxter, Practical Works, I, 407.

<sup>21</sup> Frederick J. Powicke, A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter, 1615-1691 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, pref. 1924), p. 96.

in The Reformed Pastor concerning this, "I am as apprehensive of the necessity of Preaching as some others: but yet me-thinks, the solemn praises of God should take up much more of the Lord's day than in most places they do."<sup>22</sup> He believed that the pastor should act as the people's mouth in public prayer and praise and felt that proper employment of such practices would very much improve the spiritual condition of his people, and provide blessing for them which they would not otherwise obtain.

Sacraments. The last part of the public ministry concerned the administration of the sacraments. In Baxter's day some of the most violent of the church controversies centered around these very things. As a result, there were some ministers who were so strict as to all the circumstances involved--such as kneeling for the sacrament of Communion, the use of the sign of the cross in baptism, and many, many others--that the administration of the sacraments to their people became a burden and a snare to both pastor and people; whereas there were others who were so careless and slipshod and perfunctory that the sacraments were little more than meaningless formalities to their people. Such was not the case with Baxter. He believed that they provided a real

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<sup>22</sup>

Baxter, Practical Works, XIV, 96.

means of grace and were to be administered with due reverence, humility, and appreciation for the things which they represented. As to the minor details of circumstance, he felt that considerable latitude was allowable. Thus, one could kneel, or not kneel for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper as he chose. But he was not one to make light of the sacraments or to administer them indiscriminately. In fact it was this latter stand which was one of his main points of nonconformity for he felt that it was inexcusable that those persons who were yet unrepentant and living in open sin should be allowed to partake of the Holy Communion simply because they had not been excommunicated by a bishop or his chancellor.<sup>23</sup>

#### IV. MINISTRY TO PRIVATE GROUPS

During Baxter's ministry at Kidderminster he found it to be convenient and helpful to minister to groups of his parishioners according to certain group interests or needs. Among these groups there were several regularly scheduled meetings which are of particular interest. Of these, two were the regular monthly meetings for discipline. Two others were the regular meetings held each Thursday afternoon and

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<sup>23</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, I, 20.

evening for purposes of mutual edification, instruction and examination; and two others were regular weekly meetings of some of the youth of the church. In addition there were, naturally, other meetings irregularly for special purposes as opportunity arose. However, it is particularly notable that Baxter made very special efforts to minister directly to family groups in order to strengthen family religion. Concerning the benefits derived from these various private meetings, Baxter wrote,

'Our private meetings were a marvellous help to the propagating of godliness, for thereby, truths that slipped away, were recalled, and the seriousness of the people's minds renewed, and good desires cherished. Their knowledge, also, was much increased by them, and the younger sort learned to pray by frequently hearing others. I had also the opportunity of knowing their case; for if any were touched and awakened in public, I should frequently see them drop into our private meetings. Idle meetings and loss of time were greatly prevented; and so far were we from being by this in danger of schism, or divisions, that it was the principal means to prevent them: for here I was usually present with moderating them in all.'<sup>24</sup>

Discipline meetings. There were two such meetings held once each month on consecutive days.<sup>25</sup> These will be discussed more fully under the special topic of "DISCIPLINE," The first of these meetings was composed of Baxter and his

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., I, 124-25.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

two assistant pastors, three or four of the town's magistrates; and about twenty of the more diligent laymen of the church. It was for discipline alone, though it is hard to imagine Baxter as dismissing the group, instead of employing the time in beneficial instruction and exhortation or lecturing, should it happen that there was not enough business to keep them occupied the full allotted time. The second meeting was composed of various ministers of the vicinity, and, in addition to discipline matters, it was also their custom to hold a regular disputation on some topic of concern to each of them.<sup>26</sup> It was usually Baxter's lot to be moderator, and thus he was required to prepare the written determination before hand. This meeting proved a constant source of inspiration and blessing to those ministers who attended and was doubtless one of the important factors in the successful operation of the county-wide ministerial association which Baxter had organized within a few years after beginning his second ministry at Kidderminster.

Thursday meetings. The first regularly scheduled Thursday meeting was the one held at Baxter's house after the regular Thursday lecture. For this "divers godly ministers" came and they spent the afternoon together "in

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<sup>26</sup> Loc. cit.

the truest recreation" until the neighbors came to start the second meeting.<sup>27</sup> This recreation doubtless consisted of prayer and praise, the sharing of experiences, and the talking over of various problems which confronted them, as well as the discussion of theological and doctrinal questions.

The second meeting began as soon as the other one was concluded and was composed of various of Baxter's neighbors who came in to repeat what they could of the previous Lord's day sermon, to ask any questions concerning either it or other doubts with which they were bothered--which doubts Baxter resolved for them--and then end with prayer and the singing of a psalm. Sometimes Baxter would do the praying with them, but more often he would call one or more of the others to pray, "to exercise them."<sup>28</sup>

Youth meetings. Baxter early had much success with the younger people in his church, with a majority of his converts being in their teens. He felt that the youth were the most important members in a church and that if they could but be converted before they entered into a life of sin and willful alienation from God, then the continuing strength and growth of the church were assured. Accordingly

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<sup>27</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 115-16.



he devoted much time and concern to them. It is not known how long it was after the start of his second ministry that he organized the two regular youth meetings, but in his autobiography he referred to them along with the account of his other employments. The first was a small meeting among some few of "the younger sort" who, "not being fit to pray in so great an assembly, met among a few more privately where they spent three hours in prayer together." The second meeting met "every Saturday night. . . to repeat the sermon of the former Lord's day, and to pray and prepare themselves for the following day."<sup>29</sup> In addition to the above, Powicke has reported in part that,

he seems to have drafted his young people into classes, and put them through carefully graded stages of instruction, and admitted them to communion, in some 'due and solemn manner', only so often as they were believed to understand and feel its meaning.<sup>30</sup>

If the above is correct, and the evidence offered by Powicke to substantiate it leaves little room for doubting that such actually was the case, then Baxter, in addition to all of his other duties, also supervised, and most likely did most of the instructing in, confirmation classes that were held as often as necessary. That all of Baxter's work with

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>30</sup> Powicke, Op. Cit., p. 136.

youth paid real dividends, however, cannot be gainsaid. For his church continued to grow as long as he was there, with a large part of the gain being among the youth, and he himself stated that he enjoyed extraordinary success among the youth of the parish.<sup>31</sup>

Family groups. Most of Baxter's work with family groups was done during his regular sessions with them for purposes of catechetical instruction and examination. This phase of his ministry will be developed further under the heading of "CATECHISING." However, the importance which he attached to the matter of family religion is noteworthy. The following excerpts from The Reformed Pastor reveal his stand as to the absolute importance of this work:

We must have a special eye upon Families, to see that they be well ordered, and the duties of each relation performed. . . If we suffer the neglect of this, we undo all. . . I beseech you, therefore, do all that you can to promote this business, as ever you desire the true reformation and welfare of your parishes!<sup>32</sup>

Among the instructions which he gave for properly carrying on this work, were the following: (1) get certain information as to how each family is ordered, and how God is worshipped in them, in order that you may know how to proceed

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<sup>31</sup> Life, American Tract Society, Op. Cit., p. 51.

<sup>32</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, XIV, 97-8.

with carefulness for their further good. (2) Visit them when they are likely to be at leisure and ask the head of the family whether he prays and reads the Scripture with them. If he does not, then try to convince him of this sin of neglect, and give them an example as to what they should be doing. (3) If any who are unable to pray fairly well are found, persuade them to study their own wants and to take upon themselves the obligation of learning to pray with their families. A good way is to have them go often to some of their more godly neighbors for help and instruction. (4) See to it that they have "some profitable, moving book (beside the Bible)" in each family, and persuade them to read it when they have leisure, and especially on the Lord's day. If they are not able to buy one, give it to them yourself, or have some rich persons do it as good works. (5) By all means persuade them to have all their children learn to read English. (6) Instruct them in how to spend the Lord's day and how to tend to their worldly business so as to prevent incumbrances and distractions which would interfere with the times set aside for prayer and study of the things of God. (7) If there are any members of a family who are known to be unruly, give the head of the family a special charge concerning them and make him understand what a sin he is committing in conniving at or tolerating them to continue

in such fashion. In conclusion, Baxter wrote,

Get masters of families to their duties, and they will spare you a great deal of labour with the rest, or further much the success of your labours. . . You are likely to see no general reformation till you procure family-reformation.<sup>33</sup>

## V. MINISTRY TO INDIVIDUALS

Daniel Wilson wrote in 1829 in an "Introductory Essay" to a revised edition of Baxter's The Reformed Pastor,

. . . the public ministry is not sufficient, not adequate to the urgency of the case. In a crowded congregation, numbers do not understand, do not apply. It is when we come to them in private and individually, and with all the influence which affection and character and official station give, that we touch the conscience.<sup>34</sup>

Baxter would without doubt have given his full approbation to the above statement, for, as a result of the spiritual neglect which he himself suffered as a youth, and of the dire needs which he saw around him for such a ministry, added to the weight of scriptural evidence commanding it, he from the beginning of his ministry began to practice it. It was not, however, until he had been many years in the ministry

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 98-99.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Baxter, The Reformed Pastor; or, The Duty of Personal Labors for the Souls of Men, Revised and Abridged by Rev. William Brown With an Introductory Essay by Rev. Daniel Wilson (New York: The American Tract Society, pref. 1829), p. 50.

that he came to realize something of the full import of such a ministry, and began to so seriously devote himself to it as to allow his public ministry to suffer neglect, at least in preparing for it, before he would give over any part of the ministry which he was rendering to individuals. As has been pointed out earlier,<sup>35</sup> all of the central factors in Baxter's ministry, save one, pointed up his ministry to individuals, and it was in this service that he established himself as one of the greatest of protestant pastors. Nor were these factors in any way mysterious or unusual. Orme, in one instance, cited Baxter's success as being the result of two factors, one spiritual and one physical. Of them he wrote, "Baxter was a man of faith and prayer; he was also a man of unwearied labour."<sup>36</sup> Continuing in the same vein later he wrote:

. . .where there is but an ordinary measure of fitness for the work, if such measures as these are diligently and perseveringly prosecuted, the effect will most amply repay the labour. Christian zeal, fidelity, and tenderness, can never be employed in vain.<sup>37</sup>

Teaching. Probably, the largest part of Baxter's time spent in ministering to individuals was expended direct-

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<sup>35</sup> Supra., p. 79.

<sup>36</sup> Orme, quoted from Baxter, Practical Works, I, 488.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 557.

ly in the work of religious education. This was mostly by way of catechetical instruction and examination. Both Baxter and his assistants gave at least two full afternoons of each week to this work alone.<sup>38</sup> However, it was apparent that this was not the sole means employed by him for purposes of instruction. An examination of his various employments revealed that at heart practically every one of them had teaching, in one form or another, as one of their immediate objectives. Baxter even considered his preaching to be mainly a form of teaching, as is evident from the question which he asked as follows: "If you would not teach men, what do you in the pulpit?"<sup>39</sup> This is not to say, however, that teaching was always even one objective, much less the main one. Baxter ever sought to minister to the most pressing needs of the individuals with whom he came in contact, and one of those needs was always the need for further instruction in the things of God. People cannot know without knowledge. Thus, where it was possible to make a teaching application, he always sought to do so. In those cases where such was not possible, then he contented himself with ministering to the immediate need as he was able.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

Two basic groups. Baxter considered that the individuals to whom he ministered consisted of only two major groups: (1) the unconverted, and (2) the converted. In the case of the first group, he ever sought to get them soundly converted. In the case of the second, his objective was building them up in the most holy faith.<sup>40</sup> In connection with this, Baxter always felt that his primary duty was to his own flock. Thus he did not believe himself responsible to the infidels and professed unbelievers outside of the church in the same measure as he was responsible for those who were members but who failed to show evidence of having been truly converted.<sup>41</sup> He felt that the pastor's work was with the world. To those who were members of his flock, however, he showed no partiality in his treatment of them. If any were in need, or came to him seeking help, he was most anxious to oblige, regardless of their spiritual condition. This was especially true with regard to the very needy poor who were always treated with the largest generosity of which he was capable.

Baxter's ministry to individuals, except for catechizing and disciplining, consisted mainly of that work which

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 88-89.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

falls within the following categories: (1) ministry to the poor; (2) ministry to the sick; and (3) counseling ministry according to individual needs.

Ministry to the poor. Baxter carried on an outstanding ministry to the poor. One of the reasons which he assigned for his success at Kidderminster was the fact that only a few of the people were either moderately rich or very poor, but that most were comparatively poor and thus more ready to accept the gospel.<sup>42</sup> In such a situation real want was almost always but just a step or two away. Thus it was to be expected that over the years a considerable number of the families within the parish would at one time or another find themselves in dire need. This being particularly true in view of the fact that their most besetting sin was drunkenness. However, when anyone came to Baxter for help it was his practice to physically help them as opportunity offered, thus gaining their trust and affection, and then to deal with them in spiritual matters. Concerning this he wrote: "In giving the little I had, I did not inquire whether they were good or bad, if they asked relief; for the bad had souls and bodies that needed charity most."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Powicke, op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>43</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, I, 124.



He regularly gave away books and tracts to such as could not afford them, and saw to it that every home had at least a Bible in it. In order that all might be able to hear the Bible read, he insisted that parents see that their children learn to read English, if such were at all possible. In addition he urged that the more promising students be sent on to the university. Where parents were too poor to accomplish this, Baxter was himself several times responsible for maintaining them there. Sometimes this responsibility was direct; at others it was indirect in that he obtained wealthy sponsors for them. Many of these boys subsequently entered the ministry, some of them becoming excellent preachers of the gospel.<sup>44</sup> Davies quoted him as writing thus:

'Go to the poor, and see what they want, and show at once your compassion to soul and body. Buy them a catechism, and some small books that are likely to do them good. Stretch your purse to the utmost, and do all the good you can.'<sup>45</sup>

Baxter was so conscientious in this that in one form or another he gave away practically everything that he received, allowing only a bare minimum for himself. Not only did he give a good portion of the small stipend which he

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<sup>44</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>45</sup> Davies, op. cit., p. 167.

received as curate, but he also gave away all of the sixty to eighty pounds per year which he averaged from the sale of his books. In addition, he gave away all of the tithes, plus damages, that were gathered by process of law. Baxter refused to meddle at all in the finances of the parish, but instead he had several laymen to attend to such matters, including disposition of the regular poor funds. This was especially true with regards to the collecting of tithes through process of law. Thus he wrote;

If any one refused to pay his tithes, if he was poor, I ordered them to forgive it him. . . But if the parties were able, I ordered them to seek it by the magistrate, with the damage, and give both my part and the damages to the poor; for I resolved to have none of it myself that was recovered by law, and yet I could not tolerate the sacrilege and fraud of covetous men. When they knew that this was the rule I went by, none of them that were able would do the poor so great a kindness as to deny the payment of their tithes.<sup>46</sup>

Ministry to the sick. Baxter carried on a very extensive ministry to the sick. Not only did he visit with them and pray with and for them, but he also sought to heal their bodies when this was possible. In this work, as in all others, however, his primary motive was the saving of souls. Thus he wrote that the primary purpose of the

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<sup>46</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, I, 129.

pastoral oversight of the sick was "helping them to prepare either for a fruitful life, or a happy death."<sup>47</sup> In the pursuit of this objective he believed that a time of sickness was an extraordinarily propitious time to deal with a hardened sinner. Concerning this he wrote in The Reformed Pastor:

I find not one of ten of the most obstinate, scornful wretches in the parish, but when they come to die, will humble themselves; confess their fault, and seem penitent, and promise, if they should recover, to do so no more.<sup>48</sup>

Baxter well knew the danger that promises obtained under such conditions were often honored in the breaking of them; nevertheless, the effort should always be made for the obvious fact that it may be the last opportunity for dealing with them. That he himself had relatively good success with such is evident from the following which he wrote about it.

'And God made great use of sickness to do good to many. For though sick-bed promises are usually soon forgotten, yet was it otherwise with many among us; and as soon as they were recovered, they first came to our private meetings, and so kept in a learning state, till further fruits of piety appeared.'<sup>49</sup>

Baxter, in The Reformed Pastor, gave four specific

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<sup>47</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, XIV, 101.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>49</sup> Life, American Tract Society, op. cit., p. 48.

suggestions for the oversight of the sick.<sup>50</sup>

1. Do not wait until their strength and understanding has failed them, but go as soon as you hear that they are sick, whether they ask for you or not.

2. When the time is evidently too short to deal with them in the customary way, which is leading them to the truth by degrees, it is necessary to press home only the saving essentials, namely; the following: (1) the certainty and greatness of the glory of the saints in the presence of God, so they will desire it; (2) the sufficiency and necessity of the redemption by Jesus, and the fulness of the Spirit, which men may have and is a necessity if they would see God; and (3) the necessity and nature of faith, repentance, and resolutions for new obedience according as there shall be opportunity.

3. If it appears that there is good likelihood that they will recover, then be very diligent to engage them in solemn promise to Christ to new obedience according to their opportunity.

4. If they do recover, be certain to remind them of their promise and "reduce them into performance." If they later become remiss in their duties and behavior, then go to

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<sup>50</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, XIV, 103-4.

them again and remind them of their promises.

There was one side of Baxter's ministry to the sick which does not appear in his instructions to other pastors, and that is the fact that he himself "practiced physio" for five or six of the earlier years of his Kidderminster ministry. This started as a result of his having prescribed with much success for some of the victims of a common pleurisy which occurred one year. The practice grew to such an extent, there being no doctor present in the town, that oftentimes Baxter would find as many as twenty patients at the time crowding at his door. He acknowledged that the "mercy of God" granted him more success than he expected or deserved, with the result that at times he could look over his congregation and see a great number there whose lives he had been instrumental in saving. The work was too much for him, however, as it cut too heavily into the few precious hours he had for study. Also he was fearful of "misouring and doing any one harm." He did not leave his parishioners destitute of medical care, however, but before ceasing to prescribe for them he procured a "godly diligent physician" to come and live in the town, thus relieving himself of the duty of such further practice.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp. 116-17.

This aspect of Baxter's ministry to the sick throws a very important light on his attitude towards the sick, and also on the interrelation which he believed existed between the body and the soul. Concerning this he wrote near the end of his life in his "Dying Thoughts,"

. . . as it is on earth that I must do good to others, so it must be in a manner suited to their state on earth. Souls are here closely united to bodies, by which they must receive much good or hurt; do good to men's bodies, if thou wouldst do good to their souls; . . .<sup>52</sup>

That Baxter emphasized the use of prayer in cases of sickness has already been brought out.<sup>53</sup> That his people responded to this emphasis is apparent from the fact that even the ungodly in the congregation desired prayer for their recovery in times of illness. In treating of the necessity of praying for their sin-sickness as well as their physical sickness, Baxter wrote the following:

When these ungodly persons are sick, we have daily bills from them to request the prayers of the congregation; and if we must pray for them against sickness, and temporal death, I know no reason but we should much more earnestly pray for them against sin and eternal death.<sup>54</sup>

Baxter, because of his own weakness and frequent

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<sup>52</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, XVIII, 250.

<sup>53</sup> Supra, p. 81.

<sup>54</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, XIV, 109.

painful sicknesses, was peculiarly able to minister effectively to the sick. He had suffered as they were suffering, and thus could understand their situation. He also was a living testimony to the grace of God as revealed in triumph over sickness. Thus his mere presence at a sick-bed would provide strength and encouragement to the sufferer. Most of all, though, he knew how to guide them into a vital realization of God's power and presence to heal and/or comfort according to His divine will. It was this latter part of his ministry that was most important and the one which he without doubt was most anxious to perform.

#### Ministry of counseling.

"A minister is not only for public preaching," Baxter wrote in The Reformed Pastor, "but [is] to be a known counsellor for their souls, as the lawyer is for their estates, and the physician for their bodies: so that each man that is in doubts and straits, should bring his case to him and desire resolution."<sup>55</sup>

For Baxter the main thing in counseling was dealing with cases of conscience. The science of casuistry in his day, had reached an advanced stage of development; so much so in fact that it had passed on from the more important cases and had become absolutely ridiculous with regards to its treatment of the trivial in matters of religion and conduct. Nonetheless, Baxter believed that a good part of a

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

minister's duty lay in his being well informed on how to deal with them, and how to resolve the doubts and fears of those who came to him. Especially was this true in relation to "the great case which the Jews put to Peter, and the jailor to Paul and Silas, 'What must we do to be saved?'"<sup>56</sup> Baxter believed that the parishioners should not come running to their pastor with every small matter, even as they would not in a parallel situation go to their doctor or lawyer; "but as when their estate, or life is in danger they will go to these; so when their souls are in danger, they should go to ministers."<sup>57</sup> In the smaller matters he felt that they should go to some of their godly neighbors, who could resolve the case as well as could the minister. In doing this they would thus be helping themselves as well as their neighbors. Concerning the results of this type of work, and especially with regard to the important matters, he wrote, "One word of seasonable and prudent advice given by a minister to persons in necessity, hath done that good that many sermons would not have done."<sup>58</sup>

Not only did he believe that people should come to

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<sup>56</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>57</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 97.



the minister for such cases, but he held it to be the minister's duty to acquaint his people with this aspect of his work by drawing them out and inviting them to make use of it. "We must not only be willing of the trouble, but draw it upon ourselves by inviting them hereto," declared Baxter.<sup>59</sup>

Nor does the minister's special duty cease with regard to only cases of conscience; rather it is also his responsibility to minister individually to such other needs of Christians as can be well attended to through means of private conferences. Baxter ministered in different ways to a variety of such needs in his own work. Thus, to those who were weak and fearful Christians, he sought to lead them into the higher graces in order that thereby they might be strengthened and made more fit for the Master's use. To those who were laboring under some special sin such as pride, worldliness, sensuality, and others of like kind, he sought to acquaint them with their condition and to help them to conquer it. Of this he wrote, "Though it must be done with much prudence, yet done it must be." To those who were declining Christians, or in a backslidden condition, he sought in meekness and with all of his skill to restore them to their former condition. In doing this he did not

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<sup>59</sup> Loc. cit.

spare them any embarrassment or pain which he felt to be necessary, for he instructed others to "see that the sore be thoroughly searched and healed, and the joint well set again, what pain soever it cost." To those who had fallen under some great temptation, he endeavored "speedily, prudently, and diligently" to help them. And of special note is the care which he exercised on those that were "strong." In these cases he was not content that they should merely hold their own, but he made a special effort to encourage them to progress further and increase in all the graces in order that their strength might be increased and thus they could be of more assistance to their brethren.<sup>60</sup> However, Baxter did not restrict his counseling solely to such matters as the above. For, although his primary concern was with the spiritual problems of his parishioners, he would not turn them away when they came to him with other types of problems. He early saw that in helping people with any problem he was often effectively opening the door to helping them with their more spiritual problems,<sup>61</sup> and especially with the great one of their conversion. Thus, Baxter dealt very attentively with all those who came to him. As a result he

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 90-94.

<sup>61</sup> Supra, p. 105.

soon gained such a reputation for being a successful counselor that he had both callers and correspondants from long distances who sought his help in "resolving" their problems and difficulties. Baxter did not, of course, "counsel" in the manner in which that term is ordinarily understood today. Today's view in general is that counseling "is usually helping another person to help himself, not doing something for him,"<sup>62</sup> whereas in Baxter's view counseling consisted almost entirely of persuasion, exhortation, and the giving of advice. The minister was the expert, even as the lawyer or doctor, who, by the various means at his disposal, diagnosed the case and then gave his advice as to what should be done. He "resolved" the cases and problems brought to him, and there was little, if any, of the talking through of problems which is so widespread today. That this method suited the psychology of the people of Baxter's day is apparent from the very fact of his success with them, and especially is this noteworthy in view of the fact that he was so successful in a type of problem which was basically that of personality maladjustment. For, with one problem in particular Baxter achieved truly outstanding success.

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<sup>62</sup> Seward Hiltner, Pastoral Counseling (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, MCMXLIX), p. 21.

Writing of it he said, "I know not how it came to pass, but if men fell melancholy, I must hear from them or see them, more than any physician I know."<sup>63</sup>

He early acquired a reputation for being able to deal effectively with this disease which seems to have reached almost epidemic proportions in his day. In fact it was so prevalent that he sought to relieve the demands made upon his time in treating it by publishing a small pamphlet called The Cure of Melancholy by Faith and Physic. This set forth his best ideas and prescriptions concerning the subject, and serves today to throw an interesting bit of light on the state of medical knowledge of that day. As is evident from the title, he recognized very clearly that the mind and body are closely interrelated, and thus that the condition known as "melancholy" generally arose from a combination of causes, both physical and spiritual. In accordance with this view his usual custom was to prescribe physic (more specifically, purges) to treat the bodily infirmity, and then deal with the spiritual aspect of the problem in the usual way. This latter he held to most often be the result of wilful sin or ignorance and a lack of proper trust in

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<sup>63</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, I, 536.

God and in heaven as one's future home.<sup>64</sup> The physical condition of the patient governed the treatment to be prescribed. Thus, he wrote,

This disease is sometimes in dry bodies, and sometimes in those that are moist and fat. It is sometimes in overheated blood, and sometimes in that which is too cold and sluggish, and these must have quite different cures.<sup>65</sup>

That the disease was in reality those same things which today go by the names neurotic and psychotic is evident from the following descriptions which Baxter gave:

You may thus perceive the differences in the main: one sort of melancholy persons are only sad, misgiving, fearful of troubled thoughts, despairing, as undone, and solitary musing, and cannot be satisfied and comforted, much silent, and dull to action, and will hardly stir, rather too cold than hot, troubled with wind and ill digestion.

But there is another sort that have overheated blood that are fierce, talkative, bold, boasting, laughing, that have seeming visions and raptures, unruly confident, and these must have another manner of remedy, and are almost mad already. And those that have dry lean bodies, must have a moister diet and medicine than the cold, moist, and fat.<sup>66</sup>

A typical prescription for melancholy was as follows:

I. For the most part, all of them that are merely melancholy, and not overheated near to madness, should eat but sparingly, so as may not spoil digestion; (al-

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<sup>64</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, XVII, 249-51.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 279.

<sup>66</sup> Loc. cit.

though some of them have a greedy appetite;) they should forbear cheese and beef, and swine's flesh and raw fruits and for other things not to be too curious in the quality.

But those that have hot and dry bodies, should avoid fasting, and eat as much as they can well digest, but not more, and should eat boiled borage and lettuce, and stewed prunes, stewed or roasted apples, half an hour before meat, and raw apples, if experience of windiness or rheum forbid it not.

II. And for physio, though the overheated, talkative, confident sort be near to bedlam, I shall briefly offer a little for a preventive, if there be hope.

1. Be sure that they taste no brandy or hot waters, unless you would have them presently stark mad; no, nor any hot wines, strong liquors, or aromatic things, such as ginger, pepper, cloves, or any of the like; nor mustard, horse radish, garlic, onions, or any biting thing.

2. Let them purge much with senna in whey. Take three gallons of clarified whey, put in it two handfuls of balm, and as much fumitory, (if the time of year serve,) and as much borage, boil it to two gallons, and put it into a steam pot of earth, that hath a spigot at the bottom, (or a small barrel,) and put into it, in a thin canvass bag, two ounces of senna, an ounce of epithyme, an ounce of bruised aniseed, and an handful of ground ivy, (called alehoof,) bruised, and two gads of steel to sink it; when it hath stood two days, or less, drink a pint every morning in bed, and lie an hour after it, and if it give not three stools, drink near a pint more at five o'clock continue this three weeks, at least, every day, having another vessel ready when the first is done.<sup>67</sup>

As to other aspects of treatment the following was given as more general directions for effecting a cure:

The patient must be pleased, delighted, dealt with as capable, kept from solitude and from musing, and from sad and troubling words and things, and their objections wisely answered, and their judgments in religion kept from troubling mistakes, by right information; especially they must be kept in diverting

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., pp. 279-80.

business, and if it could be hard labour, even to good transpiration and sweat, to actuate, contemporate, and purify the blood, and excite the igneous spirits, (which are the instruments of the motion and purification of the blood, and of life itself,) it would greatly help the cure; especially such exercises twice a day, before dinner and supper, an hour or two together, dissipate and concoct indigested matter, excite natural heat, and expel excrements.<sup>68</sup>

As is evident from the above, Baxter was very much the child of his age, but in some things he was quite modern, for some portions of his prescription and advice are as up-to-date as is today's newspaper. Of particular note are his references concerning the use of alcohol and condiments, and the use of correct information in treating of the patient's religious problems. As to his understanding of human nature, Charles Kemp has written that

Out of such a vast experience of contact with personality, he developed a real insight into human nature. His recognition of the subtleties of evasion and rationalization has a peculiarly modern tone and flavor.<sup>69</sup>

## VI. CATECHISING

It was in this area of his ministry that Baxter apparently accomplished his greatest amount of good while at

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., pp. 278-79.

<sup>69</sup> Charles F. Kemp, Physicians of the Soul, A History of Pastoral Counseling (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), p. 44.

Kidderminster, for he many times mentioned the success with which this work was rewarded, two of these notations are as follows:

That which was spoken to them personally, and which put them sometimes upon answers, awakened their attention, and was easier applied than public preaching, and seemed to do much more upon them.<sup>70</sup>

I am daily forced to wonder how lamentable ignorant many of our people are, who have seemed diligent hearers of me these ten or twelve years, while I spake as plainly as I was able to speak. Some know not that each person in the Trinity is God; nor that Christ is God and man; nor that he took his human nature to heaven, nor what they must trust to for pardon and salvation; nor many similar important principles of our faith. Nay, some who come constantly to private meetings are grossly ignorant; whereas, in one hour's familiar instruction of them in private, they seem to understand more, and better, than they did all their lives before.<sup>71</sup>

It was not until he had been several years in the ministry that Baxter came to see the absolute necessity of this work of personal instruction. As is usual when some one undertakes to do a type of work that is different from that which is customarily done, he received little, except scriptural, encouragement to do it. Many were more than glad to speak of the difficulties involved and the obstacles

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<sup>70</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, I, 126.

<sup>71</sup> Richard Baxter, The Reformed Pastor; or The Duty of Personal Labors for the Souls of Men, Revised and Abridged by Rev. William Brown (New York: The American Tract Society, pref. 1829), p. 299.



to be overcome, so much so in fact that they held it to be nearly the height of folly to undertake such a program. But try as he might, he could not get away from either the need as he saw it to exist around him, or from Paul's statement, as found in Acts 20:20, wherein he stated: "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house."<sup>72</sup> More and more he saw the necessity of it until, in spite of all prevailing opinion to the contrary, he inaugurated it. Having reached this decision, Baxter, with characteristic vigor and simplicity, made his plans for properly carrying out the work.

Previous to this time he had occasionally catechized a family or two at the church, but now he planned to catechize every family in the church, of those who would submit to it, at least once in each year. In order to do this he arranged it such that both he and his assistant would take fourteen families apiece each week, with the assistant going through the parish and the families in the town coming to Baxter's house, as he was not physically able to go to them. The whole of each Monday and Tuesday afternoon was given to this work, with about one hour being

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<sup>72</sup> Holy Bible, King James Version, Acts 20:20.

allotted to each family. Appointments were made the previous week by his assistant who would go through the town and inform each family as to when they were to appear during the following week.<sup>73</sup>

He prepared the way for this plan of catechising by preaching a number of sermons in which he set forth both the benefits and the necessity of having an adequate knowledge of divine truth in general, and, more especially, of the principles of divine truth upon which depend one's salvation. These messages were directed in some instances especially to the more aged as they not only had the same needs as did the others, but in addition their plight was more desperate as their remaining time upon earth was proportionately shorter, and their guilt larger because of their long neglect.

Next he, or one of the ministers, passed out catechisms to the heads of several of the families and told them at the same time that in about a month to six weeks they would be called to the church for consultation and questioning concerning how well they and each member of their families had learned them. Baxter would also make good use of this by taking it as an opportunity to more pointedly drive home the necessity and urgency of the work

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<sup>73</sup> Powicke, op. cit., pp. 92-93.

and the great benefits which would result from it. In addition he made it a means whereby he became better acquainted with his parishioners and also used it to prepare a list of those in each house who were of the age of accountability. He would then later use this list as a means of checking against those who came for instruction and examination, and also to make notes in concerning their progress.

In the event that some of the older persons had already learned a different catechism, they were then to be examined over that one rather than the new one. In the case of persons who were either very old, or for various other reasons could not efficiently or effectively learn, due allowance was made for their condition, though they were still expected to do the best that they could.

. . . tell them that you do not expect that they should perplex their minds about it, but hear it often read over, and see that they understand it, and get the matter into their minds and hearts, and then they may be borne with, though they remember not the words.<sup>74</sup>

If there were those who declined, or did not wish to come when asked to do so by one of the assistants, then Baxter went himself to them individually to convince them of the importance of the work and to show them how necessary it was for their salvation. No one was given up until every

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<sup>74</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, XIV, 317.

measure had failed to induce them to come.

Before we give them over as dogs or swine, let us try to the utmost, that we may have the experience of their obstinate contempt or renting [rending] us, to warrant our forsaking them. Charity beareth and waiteth long.<sup>75</sup>

And in Baxter's case, these failures were very few for he reported that,

Except half a dozen or thereabouts of the most ignorant and senseless, all the families in the town came to me; and though the first time, they came with fear and backwardness; after that, they longed for their turn to come again.<sup>76</sup>

Once the family had arrived for the consultation, they were dealt with in the most effective manner possible.

In this work Baxter was a truly Christian gentleman, and thus naturally respected the personality and rights of others. Consequently he treated them as gently, considerately, and thoughtfully as he could. On their arrival he would size up the situation in order to decide how he might best put them at ease and remove any fears which they might have by speaking some few words of explanation and encouragement to the family as a whole. Then he would proceed to take each one individually, and alone insofar as that was possible. In the case of women, however, he was never alone

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., pp. 317-18.

<sup>76</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, I, 582.

with them, but would arrange for as much privacy as possible without getting completely out of the sight of others.

If therefore you have a convenient place, let the rest stay in one room, while you confer with each person by themselves in another; only for the necessary avoiding of scandal, we must speak to the women, in the presence of some others: and if we do lose some advantage by it with regard to the success of our instructions, there is no remedy; better do so, than by giving occasion to those who are seeking it, destroy all the work.<sup>77</sup>

As each family was allotted but one hour, time was of utmost importance and the business at hand had to be gotten at directly. First came questions concerning the actual learning of the catechism, by receiving their answer to each question in turn. If little or none had been learned, then the catechumen was asked to rehearse the Creed and the Decalogue. Following this, some of the weightiest points were chosen and the catechumen questioned to see how well he actually understood their meaning. In this Baxter was especially careful to deal only with the weightiest of matters and then to question them regarding the nature and effects of a point rather than having it defined--"As they know what it is to repent, to believe, to be forgiven; by custom of speech they know what these mean, and yet cannot define them."<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, XIV, 320.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 321.

He sought diligently to ascertain that they truly did know sufficient for their salvation and some little edification besides, but he was extremely careful not to wound tender feelings by embarrassing them or taking any attitude towards them other than those commensurate with Christian love and concern.

When the questions were completed a period of instruction would next be given which was pointed so as to best meet their most urgent needs according to their several capacities. Thus, if it was a professing Christian who showed sufficient aptitude in the catechism, then this instruction would be along such lines as would be most helpful in strengthening or encouraging him. Or if it was some person who was grossly ignorant and understood practically nothing of Christianity, then it would be a "plain recital of the sum of the Christian Religion in a few words; for though it be in the catechism already, yet a more familiar way may better help them to understand it."<sup>79</sup> A little touch of application would then also be made at the end, and if the catechumen still did not understand, then the whole would be gone over again and again until either he did understand it, or the time was exhausted.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 324.

In the next step, if any were suspected of actually being ungodly, then they were questioned as prudently as possible concerning their spiritual condition, "and the best and least offensive way will be by a few words to prepare their minds; by convincing them of the necessity of it."<sup>80</sup> If it was at all probable that the person was yet unconverted, Baxter would endeavor with all his skill and power to bring his heart to an understanding of his condition. In this matter particular care was taken to show them what it was that the Word of God had to say concerning it, rather than merely giving his own opinions, and this was done with all possible earnestness. Concerning this Baxter wrote,

Set these things home with a more earnest voice than the former part of your discourse; for if you get not to the heart, you do little or nothing, and that which affecteth not is soon forgotten.<sup>81</sup>

This part was then followed by a short exhortation which contained two essential parts as follows:

- (1) The duty of the heart in order to a closure with Christ, and that which is contained in that closure.--
- (2) The use of external means for the time to come, and the avoiding of former sins.<sup>82</sup>

Following this Baxter would then exact promises con-

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 326.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 330.

<sup>82</sup> Loc. cit.

cerning these things, and also offer some few practical suggestions which would be of most help in strengthening them in their new committments. In addition special care was taken towards the close of each hour with a given family to reiterate concerning the necessity of the work, and also the fact that it was no more pleasant for Baxter than it was for the parishioner. Furthermore, he would have spared them such inconvenience and trouble had some other suitable method or way been available. It was at this time, too, that Baxter would impress upon the heads of the families the necessity of their properly attending to their duties with regards to family worship and the proper observance of the Lord's day.

In closing an interview with an especially poor family, it was further Baxter's custom, when he was able, to, as he said, "give them somewhat towards their relief, and from the time that is thus taken from their labours, especially for encouragement of them that do best; promise as much when they have learned the Catechism.<sup>83</sup>

Among general instructions for the conduct of this work, Baxter gave the following: (1) Speak to each person in the manner which is most likely to achieve the desired result

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 335.



(Thus to the dull and obstinate sort he would speak more earnestly and sharply than, for instance, to the tender and timorous ones that already were humbled, in which case he would rather use direction and confirmation); (2) be as condescending, familiar, and plain as possible with those having a weaker capacity; (3) give Scripture proof for all you say; (4) be as serious as you can in all parts, but especially in the application; (5) take special pains, both before and during the work, to see that your own heart is right and to excite and strengthen your belief of the truth of the Gospel, and of the invisible glory and misery that is to come; (6) prepare ahead of time by private prayer, and where time permits, begin and end each session with prayer with the people; (7) maintain constantly the proper attitude of love and concern; (8) where time is short, be careful to omit none of the most necessary parts, and, where agreeable, take several of them together who are friends who will not divulge each other's weaknesses and speak to them together where the examinations of their knowledge and state, and convictions of misery and special directions to be treated with individually.<sup>84</sup>

Baxter also felt that all of this work should not

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., pp. 334-35.

fall upon the pastor alone, but rather that he should, where possible, make use of his godly laymen. In this he was much ahead of his age. He saw most of the many benefits that would accrue to the church through actively employing these men, and most especially did he see where it would help to maintain the unity and strength of the church and protect it from outside divisive forces. He of course did not expect these laymen to take over the more confidential and intimate duties with regards to catechising, but he did especially direct them to carry forward the following: (1) teaching, praying, and especially catechising with their own families and servants; (2) from time to time catechising and instructing with meekness and patience their poor ignorant neighbors; (3) dealing often with impenitent and scandalous sinners in order to their conversion and reformation; (4) watching over one another in brotherly love; (5) engaging in prayer and thanksgiving in private meetings and on days of humiliation; (6) representing the church in matters of discipline; and (7) acting as regular lay officers (Deacons) in the church.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., pp. 347-48.

## VII. DISCIPLINE

Upon the matter of discipline, Baxter laid very great stress. Although it was a matter of little or no concern among the great majority of his brother ministers, Baxter early saw the need of using it to help maintain the purity and integrity of the church. Not only was there justification for it as evidenced by its use in the secular world, but above all it was both commanded in and illustrated by Holy Scripture. This of course was the deciding factor for Baxter, for if it was enjoined in Scripture, then Scripture was to be obeyed. And obey it he did, to the very best of his capabilities.

In his application of discipline to his parish, Baxter was concerned that above all his method and mode be scriptural; accordingly he based his practice on his interpretation of the following and similar verses of Scripture:

God that calleth all men to repentance, hath commanded us to exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; (Heb. iii. 13;) and that we do not hate our brother in our heart, but in any wise rebuke our neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him; (Lev. xix. 17;) and that if our brother offend us, we should tell him his faults between him and us; and if he hear not, take two or three, and if he hear not them, tell the church; and if he hear not the church, he must be to us as a heathen or a publican; (Matt. xviii. 17;) and those that sin, we must rebuke before all, that others may fear; (1 Tim. v. 20;) and rebuke with all authority. (Tit. i. 15.) Yea, were it an apostle of Christ that should

openly sin, he must be openly reprov'd, as did Paul with Peter, (Gal. ii. 11. 14,) and if they repent not, we must avoid them, and with such not so much as eat. (2 Thess. iii. 6. 12. 14; 1 Cor. v. 11. 13.)<sup>86</sup>

Baxter was well aware of the difficulties which were involved in attempting to discipline church members in such times as his. Concerning particularly the lack of church discipline in his own day, he wrote:

In all my life, I have never lived in the parish where one person was publicly admonished, or brought to public penitence, or excommunicated, though there were never so many obstinate drunkards, whoremongers, or vilest offenders.<sup>87</sup>

He was also fully aware of the fact that the use of discipline, except in its less severe stages, was most unlikely to have the desired effect upon the impenitent sinner. In fact, when taken to the extreme of public humiliation and ejection from the communion of the church, it was far more likely to enrage him, harden him yet farther in his sin, and embitter him against the church and its members and ministers, than it was to bring him to repentance and restoration. Thus, it was to be done for the good of the church, rather than for that of the offender. "It tendeth exceedingly," Baxter wrote in The Reformed Pastor, "to deter others from

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., pp. 110-11.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

the like crimes, and so to keep pure the congregations, and their worship."<sup>88</sup> Another thing which it tended to do was to keep the membership of the church down to a bare minimum, "for (says he) from 'very fear of Discipline all the Parish kept off except about 600, when there were in all above 1600 at Age to be communicants."<sup>89</sup>

That it did actually keep the congregation much purer than otherwise might have been the case is evident from the fact that during his entire tenure at Kidderminster it was necessary to "cast out" only five or six persons, and they were all young men who were so given to "tippling" that they could not seem to leave it. Baxter wrote of this:

These six hundred were the most understanding, religious part of the parish: all the grossly ignorant, and the common swearers, and all the drunkards and scandalous persons, were among the refusers, except about five or six young men that had got such a love to tippling that they could not leave it.<sup>90</sup>

Thus, although Baxter regularly had a church filled to overflowing with regard to his congregation, the number of those who consented to put themselves directly under his care as minister, and thus to submit to the discipline

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>89</sup> Powicke, op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>90</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, I, 579.

imposed by him, was indeed by comparison quite small. Had the whole group of the parish done so, his lot would have been hard indeed. About this he has written:

But if we had been troubled with all the other thousand or twelve hundred of the parish, and so with all the other swearers, ralers, common drunkards, some infidels, &c., what work should we have had! So much as I dare confidently say that, without being half so strict and troublesome as the ancient canons were, we could not possibly have done more in the work of discipline than govern one parish. Nor could we have done so much, but with such omissions as nothing but disability would have quited our consciences under.<sup>91</sup>

In the actual use of reproof and church discipline, Baxter's procedure was as follows. First he would privately reprove and admonish those whom he knew to be living offensively or impenitently. Information to this effect was also often obtained from some of his more godly laymen who had privately admonished one of the brethren, but in vain. On the basis of such information, Baxter would himself go privately to the individual involved, especially if his offence was not of a public nature, and see if he could not bring him to repentance. For this work Baxter claimed that a man needed as much skill as he could muster and that each man must be approached in the manner which was most likely to effect the desired result, barring of course actual compromise with his sin. In most cases, however, he found

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., pp. 579-80.

it necessary to deal with them with the greatest plainness and power if he were to succeed in stirring them up to some understanding of the seriousness of what they were doing.

If this private reproof failed to produce the desired effect, then Baxter would proceed to a more public form, though still not before the whole church. Before bringing anyone to this stage of reproof, Baxter demanded that proper proof of the offence be available. Thus, he would refuse to proceed against someone on merely the accusations of any one, even the best in the church, unless adequate proof were on hand that could not be gainsaid. Concerning this he wrote:

It is better to let many vicious persons go unpunished, or uncensured, when we want sufficient evidence, than to censure one unjustly; which we may easily do, if we will go upon too bold presumptions; and then it will bring upon the pastors the scandal of partiality, and unrighteous and injurious dealing, and make all their reproofs and censures contemptible.<sup>92</sup>

This more public reproof was still not actually public, but was done before a chosen group and in a two-fold manner. First, the offender who had failed to respond to the private admonition was told to appear before a group of his ministers, magistrates, and laymen who met together once each month to try cases of discipline. This body was generally composed of the following: Baxter and his two assist-

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<sup>92</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, XIV, 105.

ants; "three godly justices of peace" whom Baxter persuaded to hold their regular monthly meeting at the same time and place with them in order to countenance the proceedings; "four ancient godly men" that performed the office of deacons; and, lastly, over twenty of the older laymen who, without pretending to any office, met with them to be witnesses to the fact that they did the church and sinners no wrong, and also to awe the offenders by their presence.<sup>93</sup> The offenders were then given a fair hearing before this group, reprov'd for their conduct, and exhorted to proper repentance and confession. If they still failed to do so, then the next step was a still more public trial on the following day before a group of "a dozen or twenty" of Baxter's brother ministers who could come together for mutual edification and also to further exhort, admonish, and reprove the impenitent offenders.<sup>94</sup>

In the meantime private and semi-private prayer was made for all the offenders, that God would open their eyes and hearts to make them repentant.<sup>95</sup>

If they yet remained impenitent, then it was the duty

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<sup>93</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, I, 578.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 579.

<sup>95</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, XIV, 108.



of the church to publicly reprove them and to invite them again to repentance. If they still refused, then they were either temporarily suspended, while much prayer was being made for them, or actually excluded from the communion of the church, depending on its discretion. Concerning this last and final step Baxter wrote, "but before we proceed to an exclusion ' a statu, ' it is very meet (ordinarily) that three days' prayer for him and patience towards him should antecede."<sup>96</sup>

When an offender did repent he was received again into the communion of the church, immediately if it was his first offence and he seemed genuinely repentant; if, however, he was one who had lived long in sin, then it was "most meet that he do wait in penitence a convenient time before he be restored."<sup>97</sup>

In dealing with these repentant offenders great care was exercised by Baxter to the end that they were neither discouraged by too much severity, nor treated so leniently as to make nothing of the discipline. Generally it was necessary that the offender be serious in his humiliation and truly sensible of his sin. Further, he was required to,

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

"Beg the communion of the church, and their prayers to God for his pardon and salvation," and to promise to "fly from such sin for the time to come, and watch more narrowly, and walk more warily."<sup>98</sup> Baxter would then assure him "of the riches of God's love, and the sufficiency of Christ's blood to pardon his sins, and that if his repentance be sincere, the Lord doth pardon him."<sup>99</sup> Baxter would then charge both the offender and the congregation; the former to the end that he might be truly and permanently recovered, and the latter that they should forgive and forget even as Christ had forgiven and forgotten their own sins.

When an exclusion from the communion of the church actually took place, Baxter stated that it should be done as follows:

. . . the ministers or governors of that church are authoritatively to charge the people in the name of the Lord to avoid communion with him; and to pronounce him one, whose communion the church is bound to avoid; and the people's duty is obediently to avoid him, in case the pastor's charge contradict not the word of God.<sup>100</sup>

Baxter, however, was in a peculiarly favorable position to make effective use of church discipline. In many

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<sup>98</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>99</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>100</sup> ibid., p. 114.

ways he had the advantages of being a member of the Established Church, and thus had the countenance, at least, of the local civil authorities. At the same time he had most of the liberties of an independent congregation, especially in that he was not actually subject to a higher church authority, but was quite literally on his own. Thus there was not the possibility of offenders making long fights up through progressively higher ecclesiastical courts. All discipline was handled on the local level, and what involvement there was from the outside consisted only of brother ministers whose views were parallel to those of Baxter. The congregation was voluntary, and yet, as it was the only church in the town, it was the only place to which the townspeople could conveniently go. To those who chose to remain outside of the communion of the church, and yet within the congregation, the only discipline possible was through admonition and exhortation coupled with prayer for their repentance and restoration.

Baxter clearly saw his duty with regard to discipline in the church, and accomplished it to the very best of his great ability. It was always in the spirit of loving concern and charity for the offenders, however, as is evident from the following portions of a letter which he wrote to one who, although he had made the public repentance and confession

required of him, continued in his faults of slander and falsehood, to which were added naturally the ones of deceptive penitence and subscription to a deceitful confession.

'You will take it ill, its like; but I dare not, for that forbare to tell you that you discover by this an unsanctified heart, and I am confident that if you should die in such a state tonight you would be in hell to-morrow: for my part I would not be in your state for all the world. I protest to you in ye sight of God, I speak not this to you in spleene and passion, but in such compassion that if you were my only Brother I should say the same, and would do by you as I do, and dare do, no otherwise--though you and a thousand should hate me for it. . . . Ah, John Pearsall, sin is not worthy all this friendship. It must up by the roots or you are a lost man. Have you so little sense of what hath bin so long preached to you from Proverbs v. 11, 12? Must those be your own complaints? And is there no remedy against deep-rooted selfishness and unreasonable wilfullness? Think not that these lines are written to you without tears. To conclude, by God's assistance I resolve to morrow, if you refuse a free and downright Humiliation and Confession, to desire ye congregation to pray for you, and ye next day, if you do it not, to warne them to reject and avoid you. These phrases we use instead of ye word excommunication because they are the Scripture Words, and because the highest sort of excommunication we meddle not with. The Lord give you repentance, and a new and soft heart.

'Your faithful and truly loving Pastor

'R. BAXTER

'P. S. I have sent you a booke which I intreat you to accept and read over; and, if we are forced to cast you out of our communion, yet, do not in passion deny me this favour. It may be you may consider it better in your reading than you did in the hearing.'<sup>101</sup>

Although this particular attempt at discipline may

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<sup>101</sup> Powicke, op. cit., pp. 111-12.

not have had the desired effect, it is evident that something did restore the young man to the fold, for in a footnote Powicke has written,

It is pleasant, after all, to find John Peersall's name among the 'affectionate' and 'engaged friends' who wrote to Baxter the letters of August 2, 1660 and January 28, 1661-2. 102

That Baxter was himself convinced of the usefulness and merit of using discipline in the church is evident from the following which Orme has quoted him as having written.

'The exercise of church discipline was no small furtherance of the people's good: for I found plainly, that without it, I could not have kept the religious sort from separation and division. There is something generally in their dispositions, which inclineth them to disassociate from open ungodly sinners, as men of another nature and society; and if they had not seen me do something reasonable for a regular separation of the notorious, obstinate sinners from the rest, they would irregularly have withdrawn themselves. It had not been in my power with bare words to satisfy them, when they saw we had liberty to do what we would. 103

That others would disagree with this view is only to be expected. Powicke, in depreciation of it, wrote:

Baxter might plead for it in the interest of the Church; but the Church is an abstraction compared with the individual. It is the individual soul that counts even in a church. And if a system of discipline is good for the church, but in every case of its strict enforcement (as Baxter admits) makes the individual morally worse, or even drives him mad, can it be called Christian or wise? Did Baxter ever suspect that his system was a

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102 Ibid., footnote 1, p. 112.

103 Baxter, Practical Works, I, 126.

theory deduced from Scripture but defied by human nature; and therefore, bound to fail? At any rate, the consequences of its application cast a shadow across the success of his last years at Kidderminster.<sup>104</sup>

How Powicke could cast Baxter's concept of church discipline off as something "deduced from Scripture" when it is so plainly taught therein and substantially in the form in which Baxter practiced it, is quite beyond the writer's comprehension. It is only natural that human nature--and this implies unregenerate humanity--would defy it, even as it defies in varying degrees all the other commandments given of God by inspiration in the Scriptures. But that does not mean that God-fearing men, with a holy boldness and the Spirit to help them, should not at all times and in all ages seek to administer the affairs of the church as God has instructed that they should be, rather than according to the wisdom of man. Baxter did it, and as a result his name will continue to resound down through the years of history as one of the greatest pastors in the earthly history of the church. He counted Him faithful who had called him to the task, and he himself was but a faithful steward.

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<sup>104</sup> Powicke, op. cit., p. 113.

## VII. SUMMARY

It has been the purpose of this chapter to present a detailed consideration of the methods and techniques which Baxter used in his practice of pastoral care.

It was noted that Baxter's main purpose in life was "the gaining of souls to Christ;"<sup>105</sup> that his view of pastoral work was of course dominated by this idea; that he considered every aspect of a minister's work to be a part of his oversight (pastoral care) of the flock; and that his work was built almost altogether around the main points of awakening preaching, holy example, diligent inspection, with catechising, and the faithful administration of discipline.

His work fell naturally into three main divisions: (1) public ministry; (2) ministry to more private groups, including families; and (3) ministry to individuals. In this latter division were included the more outstanding aspects of his work which were counseling, catechising, and using church discipline.

In his public ministry it was noted that Baxter was first of all a man of unusually strong faith, and thus laid much stress on the use of prayer, both privately and in groups. His preaching was outstanding for its simplicity

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<sup>105</sup> Supra, p. 78.

(in that he preached almost exclusively on the great truths and doctrines of Christianity), plainness, and very great earnestness. In addition, he ever sought to improve the spirit and tone of congregational worship, especially through the use of hymns and psalms given generally to praise and thanksgiving.

In his ministry to more private groups it was noted that Baxter had several regularly-scheduled meetings, for both adults and youth, whereby the things taught from the pulpit were greatly strengthened in the lives of those who attended them. His success was especially great among the youth, some of whom came together during the week for three hours of prayer and again on Saturday evening to repeat the sermon of the previous Lord's day and prepare themselves for the following day. In this same division it was also noted that Baxter placed very much stress on the necessity of family religion. He believed that no reformation, unless it at the same time resulted in a family-reformation, would result in any lasting benefits. The largest portion of his ministry to families came in his work of catechishing; his plan was to do this work by taking a family at a time.

In his ministry to individuals Baxter made his outstanding contribution as a pastor. This ministry was notable primarily for the love and concern which motivated it, the



in large measure upon its relative severity. Baxter had unusually good success, comparatively speaking, among these, one of the main reasons for this apparently being his recognition of the two-fold nature of the disease, i.e., that it was a combination of both physical and mental difficulties. He had a very clear concept of the fact of the inter-relation which exists between the mind and body, and thus adjusted all aspects of his ministry, including that to those afflicted with melancholy, in the light of this concept. Thus, he was never loath to minister to men's bodies as he realized that thereby he was ministering in part to their souls, and more especially that he was preparing the way for a subsequent and more direct approach to their spiritual troubles.

The last two divisions of this chapter have treated respectively of "Catechising" and "Discipline," both of which were the most outstanding and unusual aspects of Baxter's ministry while at Kidderminster. In the work of catechising he had a simple but very effective plan whereby he and his assistant dealt with fourteen families each, during two days of each week. In this way he was able to go through the entire parish once during each year. His greatest stress was, of course, on the fundamentals of the faith, and he ever strove to get his people to know these in their hearts as well as in their heads. This work, he wrote,

"yielded him the most comfort in the practice of it" of all the work that he ever attempted.

The work of disciplining offending members of his communion was without doubt the most controversial work which Baxter undertook while at Kidderminster. In spite of the opposition, however, he saw the necessity of it both on scriptural and historical grounds as well as according to the need of the church, and thus undertook it as a faithful steward. In spite of the fact that in extreme cases it seems never to have resulted in the reformation of the individual involved, Baxter held that it had been of very much benefit to the church as a whole, and that had he not practiced it there would have been divisions and separations among them in spite of all else that he could do to prevent it. He followed as exactly as possible the scriptural method of private reproof and exhortation to repentance, followed by more of the same in increasingly public situations and ultimately issuing in the offender's being "cast out" from the communion of the church. This latter was resorted to only five or six times during Baxter's entire stay at Kidderminster.

## CHAPTER V

### A CONSIDERATION OF BAXTER'S CONCEPT AND METHODS AS APPLICABLE TODAY

In any study which concerns itself with persons, events, or things of an age that is long since past, one of the basic questions which inevitably arises is, what relevance does it have for today? It has been the purpose of this chapter to answer that question with relation to Richard Baxter's concept and practice of pastoral care.

#### I. INTRODUCTION

It is obviously plain that this age is vastly different from that of Baxter, which was seventeenth-century England. Entire volumes might be written which would treat only of the differences which can be found between various areas of life today in comparison with what they were in Baxter's time. Among this vast number of differences only three major ones will be mentioned in connection with this treatment. These are: (1) the vast increase in complexity and secularity of western civilization; (2) the widespread destruction of belief in the absolute authority of the Holy Scriptures; and (3) the appearance and rapid rise in significance of the disciplines of sociology, psychology,

and psychiatry. In spite of the vast differences which do exist between Baxter's time and the contemporary scene, however, there are certain basic human needs which are still fundamentally the same and thus must be met in essentially the same way, though the external accidents of method and technique may be somewhat different. Further, the most important of these needs are the particular ones with which the Christian minister should be most vitally concerned. Among these are the primary spiritual needs for conversion, sanctification, and edification; the primary soul needs for respect, understanding, appreciation, recognition, and belonging; and the primary physical needs for food, clothing, and shelter. Concerning part of these needs, McIllyar Lichliter wrote in 1931,

That was in 1886, but the fundamental processes of individual transformation and life adjustment are unchanged. They have not changed since Jesus looked into the heart of Nicodemus; they have not changed since the emotional release and spiritual reorientation which Peter experienced on a house top in Joppa, or Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road.<sup>1</sup>

H. Orton Wiley has also had something of importance to say fairly recently (1943) concerning some of these unchanging basic needs, and concomitant problems, which have faced humanity throughout the ages. He has written,

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<sup>1</sup> McIllyar H. Lichliter, The Healing of Souls (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1931), p. 47.

A recent review of the writings of the ancient fathers has impressed us afresh with the similarity of the problems which the church faces in each succeeding age, and the manner in which it has successfully met them. Human nature is the same and the claims of the gospel are the same. Underneath the accidents of social change, therefore, are the eternal truths upon which the church is founded. The manner in which the fathers grappled with heathenism--refined or raw--the personal sins and social irregularities against which they directed their invectives, and the enthusiasm with which they pressed their claims are well worthy of consideration on the part of modern ministers.<sup>2</sup>

Russel L. Dicks, in his "Preface" to Charles F. Kemp's book, Physicians of the Soul, also made a statement which indirectly supports this contention. He wrote,

One of the striking things about these pastors of the past, as well as some of those of more recent date, is that they were also evangelists. Their practice of the cure of souls lay in their belief that they knew the answer for the needs of each.<sup>3</sup>

This statement supports the writer's contention because of the fact that each of the pastors to whom he was referring (Jesus, Paul, Luther, Wesley, Baxter, Brooks, Bushnell, Drummond, Moody, and Gladden) is commonly noted for his having been a strong believer in the authority of

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<sup>2</sup> H. Orton Wiley, "The Ancient Fathers and Modern Problems," The Preacher's Magazine, 18:352, November-December, 1943.

<sup>3</sup> Charles F. Kemp, Physicians of the Soul, A History of Pastoral Counseling (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), p. vii.

the Holy Scriptures, and thus of the basic doctrines of Christianity as taught or implied therein. Further, these doctrines indicate that man does have certain basic, unchanging needs and furthermore that these needs must be met in basically unchanging ways. This is especially true with regard to man's primary spiritual needs of conversion, sanctification, and edification, which needs should be the primary concern of the Christian minister.

Having considered the fact that man's primary needs remain the same irrespective of the accidents of his environment, and further that the more basic of these needs are the ones which are of primary concern to the Christian minister, the investigator now proposes to consider which factors and methods found in Baxter's concept and practice of pastoral care are still relevant for the minister of today, and more especially which ones, if any, are in need of being reinstated in the pastor's work today.

## II. APPLICABLE POINTS FROM BAXTER'S CONCEPT AND PRACTICE OF PASTORAL CARE

Singleness of purpose. One of the first points at which the modern-day pastor would do exceptionally well to emulate Baxter is at the point of having an all-inclusive, directive purpose for his ministry. In the case of Baxter

it has been shown that this was "the winning of souls to Christ."<sup>4</sup> This was the one point around which could be integrated all of the manifold duties and tasks which he performed, even including his voluminous writings, and especially his vast labors in dealing with individuals in private, face-to-face relationships. It is an established fact that those who appear to make the greatest success in the secular world are those who have some definite objective or guiding purpose in life, and subordinate all of their other interests and work to that one, main thing. That this is not confined to the secular world is also abundantly evident, with the Apostle Paul, who having said "This one thing I do," did just that with all the skill and power at his command, being a most outstanding example in point. Christ also is a case in point, having, by his own admission, come into the world to save sinners, and this one purpose gave meaning and direction to all that he did and taught.

In connection with this primary purpose there can be only one suitable subject for one's ministry, namely "spiritual things." Baxter wrote in The Reformed Pastor that the "subject matter of the Ministerial work, is in general spiritual things, or matters that concern the pleasing of

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<sup>4</sup> Supra, p. 78.

God, and the salvation of our people."<sup>5</sup> Using similar language, although it is very doubtful if they had exactly similar things in mind, Rollin J. Fairbanks has recently stated that,

Our primary role in pastoral care is a spiritual one. This admittedly sounds trite. However, because of the overemphasis today on the acquisition of psychological skills we all need more than ever to be reminded that we are ordained or "set aside" to function as men of God and not as social case workers, labor agitators, consulting psychologists, vocational guidance specialists, rural economists, experts on industrial relations, psychiatrists, and so on.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, though Baxter and Fairbanks may both have had the same concept with regard to spiritual things, nonetheless they were here both pointing in the same direction, which is that the pastor should devote his time, talents, and energies to those things which are specifically the work of the pastor, and not to divert his efforts into those other fields, however good and desirable they might be, which are essentially the provinces of professions other than the ministry. Today, when so many pastors are so busy about a

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Baxter, The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter with a Life of the Author and a Critical Examination of his Writings by the Rev. William Orme. . . (London: J. Duncan, MDCCLXXX), XIV, 80.

<sup>6</sup> Rollin J. Fairbanks, "Qualifications and Preparation for the Pastoral Ministry," J. Richard Spann, editor, Pastoral Care (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, MCMLI), p. 30.



multitude of tasks which are obviously not the primary function of an evangelical, orthodox Christian ministry, this point has particular meaning and bearing. Paul's exhortation to Timothy wherein he exhorted him, "Till I come, attend to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching," and not to neglect the gift which was his through the laying on of hands,<sup>7</sup> could well be given serious consideration by multitudes of today's ministers as applicable to their own situations.

Faith in God. This is the first prerequisite for any minister who is desirous of being successful in the work of the Lord. In listing the elements common to outstanding servants of God," Andrew Blackwood has listed first of all, "the need of faith." Continuing in his treatment of this topic, he wrote,

Each of them has relied on Him for wisdom and restraint, both in determining what to do, and in devising practical methods. . . He looks up for guidance and yet keeps both feet squarely on the ground.<sup>8</sup>

Baxter's ministry was of just this type. He wrote in The Reformed Pastor, " Our whole work must be carried on in

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<sup>7</sup> I Timothy 4:13-14, The New Testament, Revised Standard Version (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1946).

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Blackwood, Pastoral Leadership (New York: Abingdon: Cokesbury Press, MCMXLIX), p. 258.

a sense of our insufficiency, and in a pious, believing dependence upon Christ."<sup>9</sup> This is the very heart of one's ministry. Without it one may create a lot of stir and activity and thus appear to men to be accomplishing little if anything on the Kingdom plane. It is true that faith is "the gift of God," but it is also true that God has revealed to man many of the ways in which he accomplishes his purposes, and one of the prime ones is that man must be a seeker even for those things which God wishes to give to him. Thus, He has revealed in his Word that men are to "seek" and "knock" and "desire the good gifts." In the light of such scriptural promises and injunctions, Baxter actively sought to increase his faith by using it. And he praised God that, as he used it in prayer for himself and others, the church and other societies, that he saw the immediate, tangible results of God's having answered it, and that such things were means of increasing his faith still further. And so can it be with all ministers, if they will but take the initiative. Baxter's life and ministry, as is also that of each of the more godly pastors of more recent years, is a strong challenge to go higher in this matter of faith. Without it, a man's ministry will utterly fail. With an ever-

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<sup>9</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, XIV, 124.

increasing measure of this "good gift" of the Father, there is no known limit to which one's ministry may conceivably reach.

Love for souls. One of the outstanding teachings of psychology is that people cannot generally help others unless they have a genuine love and concern for them. Thus, in every recent book which treats of the pastoral work of the minister, the fact that the pastor must first love his people before he can truly serve them is reiterated over and over again. This is so well established and accepted as to need no discussion here beyond merely being mentioned. But such is not the case with regard to loving men's "souls." For this latter is a term which is suggestive of a theology which is quite generally held to be outmoded in this enlightened day. As Vergilius Ferm has written, "Modern psychology has, for the most part, lost the soul and substituted terms less encumbered by traditional theologies and metaphysics."<sup>10</sup> Thus it is a term that is seldom heard outside of the confines of the remaining groups of orthodox evangelical Christians. Nevertheless, this investigator believes that it is yet a legitimate expression and that it carries

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<sup>10</sup> Vergilius Ferm, editor, An Encyclopedia of Religion (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1945), p. 729.

an inclusive, though higher, connotation than does the word "man." For this latter has come to mean quite generally only so much of man as is involved in this world; whereas the term "soul" carries with it an other-worldly aspect as well as being pertinent to this world. Thus, when Baxter wrote that he early had a "thirsty desire for the salvation of men's souls" he was implying that he wanted them saved for heaven and eternity and from a life of sin in this world.

Today additional meaning has been added to the term "salvation" which, though not reducing the intent as understood by such men as Baxter, has given it also a broader meaning for this present world. Thus, largely through the influence and findings of psychology and psychiatry, it has come to include also the being saved from many of the conflicts, fears, and frustrations which are common to this life, but which disappear in a life that is properly adjusted with relation to God, the world, and one's fellow men.

Baxter not only had, as he phrased it, a "thirsty desire of men's conversion and salvation,"<sup>11</sup> but he also

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<sup>11</sup> The Life of Rev. Richard Baxter. Chiefly Compiled from his own Writings (New York: The American Tract Society, n.d.), p. 20.

had a genuine love and concern for men as such, albeit this was predicated ultimately upon his concern for the welfare of their immortal souls. Thus, he ever sought to do them all the good he could in whatever ways were open to him. He longed to see them freed from the straight jacket of abject poverty, the tyranny of ignorance, and the pains of bodily diseases and mental ills. Hence, he did all within his power to relieve them of these things, but always with the hope and desire that thereby he might have prepared an effectual entry for dealing with them about the welfare of their souls.

Men are still in need of having their souls saved, or won to Christ. Thus, W. Curry Mavis has recently written that "The preacher's passion for souls and faith in God are the bases for a soul-winning ministry."<sup>12</sup> Those who are desirous of winning souls to Christ can do well indeed to emulate Baxter not only in having a "thirsty desire" to see men's souls saved, but also in having and thus showing a genuine concern and love for their physical and mental well-being as well.

Devotion. A. L. Cargill has recently written that, The true minister must give himself wholly to the

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<sup>12</sup> Supra, p. 61.

work and put into the service his spirit with all its functions, his mind with all its faculties, his body with all its powers. . .<sup>13</sup>

This was exactly what Baxter did, and today, even as was too true in his age, one of the greatest sins among the clergy is right at this point--they do not, as Baxter phrased it, "seriously, unreservedly and industriously" lay themselves out in the work of the Lord. In general, a man's success in any work, other things being equal, will be dependent upon the degree of his devotion to the task. As has already been shown,<sup>14</sup> Baxter has set one of the most outstanding examples on record at this point. He was so completely, wholly, and absolutely dedicated and devoted to his work as an overseer of the flock that everything which he did and said and thought was pointed in that direction. So zealous was he of this that every aspect of his life was as carefully disciplined as he could make it. Even in matters of recreation, Baxter experimented until he determined the minimum amount of strenuous walking for exercise that was required, not to keep him in the best possible condition but, to maintain the minimum bodily efficiency which he felt

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<sup>13</sup> A. L. Cargill, "The Office of the Ministry," The Preacher's Magazine, 23:369, November-December, 1948.

<sup>14</sup> Supra, pp. 65 f.

would allow him to, all things considered, best care for his total work.

It cannot of course be expected that the pastor of today will tie himself to the methods, procedures, and techniques, nor even the schedule, which Baxter used in the seventeenth century. But nowhere can the modern minister go to find a better and more challenging example as to the utter devotion which should be characteristic of every minister of Christ.

Orderly planning. Baxter saw that in all things God is a being who delights in orderliness. This was revealed to him through nature, the Scriptures, and the successful conduct of the secular businesses around him. Seeing the truth of this, he conducted himself accordingly. Planning and orderliness were a vital part of his ministry. No clearer evidence of this is seen anywhere than in his conducting of the work of catechising his people. Not one person in the entire parish was overlooked. Not one family, regardless of how mean and poor and outwardly unlovely, but what was sought out and invited with kindness, condescension, and insistence to join in the great privilege of learning about the things of God, and more especially those pertaining to their own salvation.

His conduct of the work of catechising revealed not

only that he believed strongly in planning, but also that he strongly believed, as he stated many times, that God's ordinary way of working is through means. Baxter held to no mistaken belief that God's plan for his ministers is that they should never plan, or use means, but rather depend solely upon the Spirit to do everything. Thus it was found that he was always actively using all of the means, and especially the scripturally appointed ones, at his disposal all the while looking to God in faith believing that he would honor them. That God did just that is one of the facts of history.

This same work of catechising also further revealed that, not only did Baxter have a plan that included every one in his charge, and make use of all available means at his disposal, but that he also planned from the top down in that it was so conducted as to give the greatest amount of time and attention to the most important things. "Insisting most on the greatest and most necessary things" was almost a byword with him, and was one of the governing principles in all of his manifold activities.

Nor was Baxter alone in this insistence upon proper planning and the execution of those plans once formulated. Of the five elements which Blackwood has listed as having been common to the ministries of the "outstanding servants of God," two have dealt with these very things, namely, (1)



"the call for strategy," and (2) "the use of tactics."<sup>15</sup> Thus, the pastor who today will carefully plan and execute his work, make full, discriminating use of locally adapted scriptural means, and be careful to lay the greatest stress on the most important things, will be in the most excellent company of a long-standing tradition of significant importance.

Person-centeredness. Baxter's work in the catechizing, instructing, and counseling with his parishioners also revealed in its clearest light one of the most significant facts in the entire practice of his ministry--namely the fact of his having dealt so largely in face-to-face, private contacts with his people. This revealed that he had a very high concept of individuality and unusual respect for personality. Unwittingly he was an outstanding exponent for at least some phases of what is now known as "individual psychology," as he understood and utilized a concept of "individual differences" long before it was even stated or suspected by modern psychologists. It was this technique alone which was doubtless most largely responsible for his success at Kidderminster.

This is a technique as old as Christianity--for Jesus

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<sup>15</sup> Blackwood, op. cit., p. 258.

employed it very extensively--and yet which is once again just in the process of being "rediscovered" and utilized by the churches of today. The emphasis which is being made on "personal evangelism" in the vast visitation evangelism campaigns which are becoming so prevalent today,<sup>16</sup> and the large literature of recent date which treats of the subject of pastoral counseling are in themselves ample evidences of the church's belated return to a person-centered ministry. Of the hundreds of quotations which might be given in support of this contention, the following one by Wayne E. Oates is considered sufficient in view of the obviousness of the fact. In 1951 he wrote, "All other functions of the pastor have meaning in terms of this concern for persons, and the use of his time and energy is gauged by it."<sup>17</sup>

This investigation has shown no reason to imply that the pastor of today should take Baxter as his model and guide for the practice of pastoral counseling. Most of his approaches and techniques, even if known, would most likely be as unsuccessful today as they were successful in his day. Man's psychology is vastly different from what it was then.

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Leslie J. Ross, "Methodism Evangelism Rises Again," The Christian Advocate, 126:1282-83, October 18, 1951.

<sup>17</sup> Wayne E. Oates, The Christian Pastor (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, MCMLI), p. 73.

Thus, in a majority of instances, the same things which appealed to them would have little response from men now. Baxter very largely gave advice. Today men have been so conditioned in their thinking that they resent advice as such, though they still need it about as much as ever. It is the way of tendering it that must be adapted. As Seward Hiltner has written,

Broadly speaking, the special aim of pastoral counseling may be stated as the attempt by a pastor to help people help themselves through the process of gaining understanding of their inner conflicts.<sup>18</sup>

Stated in a slightly different way, the above becomes, "Counseling is usually helping another person to help himself, not doing something for him."<sup>19</sup>

Although this investigation has shown that Baxter is not to be followed slavishly, it has revealed that the modern pastor can well follow Baxter in the fact that he made his ministry person-centered and that in so doing he: (1) studied and learned to know his people--every one of them; (2) learned, in whatever ways that were open to him, of their various specific needs; (3) studied those needs and how best to meet them in the individuals in which they were found to

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<sup>18</sup> Seward Hiltner, Pastoral Counseling (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, MCMXLIX), p. 19.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

exist; and (4) labored with all his skill and power and ability to satisfactorily satisfy those needs. It is maintained that no pastor can do less today and still consider that he is satisfactorily performing the work of a true shepherd of his flock.

Few main emphases. As has been pointed out earlier, Baxter's ministry was built around a few leading points on which he laid great stress. These were awakening preaching, holy example, instruction with catechising, and the faithful application of discipline.<sup>20</sup> It is the investigator's opinion that today a ministry built upon essentially the same basis and diligently pursued would likewise bare much fruit for the Lord. The trend for sometime has been towards extreme specialization in almost every field but that of the Christian ministry. It has been generally recognized that knowledge has increased to such a vast extent that a person can hardly be expected to be genuinely expert in even one field as broadly conceived, much less so several different ones at the same time. And yet it is quite generally assumed that the minister of today should be outstanding in such widely different fields as preacher, teacher, administrator, business man, after-dinner speaker and raconteur,

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<sup>20</sup> Supra, p. 79.

financier in that he can raise large sums of money, executive for various local community enterprises, and sometimes even part-time janitor and general handy-man for the church property as well. And even this is but a partial list! As someone has wisely said, "This ought not be be." Fairbanks has recently written relative to this, "It is only when the minister side-steps or courageously avoids the temptation to function as entertainer, town orator, medicine man, or policeman that he can become a shepherd of souls."<sup>21</sup> It is indeed quite time that ministers began again generally to function in their intended and God-called areas, rather than to continue spreading their efforts so thinly as to be only superficially effective, having no depth within either themselves or their work.

Preaching. As has been pointed out several times during the course of this report, Baxter considered that preaching was an integral part of the work of pastoral care. In fact, he considered it as being of major importance because it was the work wherein the pastor ministered to the largest number of his people. This view, however, is not the one that is generally held today. Instead, as a result of the increasing emphasis on the pastoral aspect of the

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<sup>21</sup> Fairbanks in Spann, op. cit., p. 25.

ministerial work during the past fifteen or twenty years, there has gradually come a dividing of the two into separate categories rather than just important phases of one major task. Thus, Oates has recently written,

Vital contrasts distinguish the preaching ministry from the pastoral task. . . . The preaching ministry is a public one. . . . But the pastoral task is ordinarily a private and personal ministry, and the relative anonymity of the service is emphasized.<sup>22</sup>

That such, however, is not the opinion of all modern-day men of importance in this field is evident from the following which Andrew Blackwood has written concerning a book by H. H. Farmer, of Cambridge, England in which he said in part, ". in this heart-searching book the theologian declares, "Preaching is essentially a pastoral activity."<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Peter H. Pleune, former Professor of Pastoral Theology, Louisville Presbyterian Seminary, has written,

It is not enough to say that in the pulpit a minister is a preacher, and that outside of the pulpit he is a pastor; for preaching too is, or ought to be, a pastoring of the flock. We offer no definition of a pastoral ministry lest we seem to limit it.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, not only is preaching validly held to be an important part of pastoral work, but it is also maintained

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<sup>22</sup> Oates, op. cit., p. 64.

<sup>23</sup> Blackwood, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>24</sup> Peter H. Pleune, Some to be Pastors (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, MCMXLIII), p. 8.

that the modern pastor would do very well to emulate some of the important points found in Baxter's practice of preaching.

First, there is the matter of bringing a challenging message. Gaines S. Dobbins, in listing the factors that are necessary to a successful ministry, stated that "A challenging pulpit message is indispensable."<sup>25</sup> Baxter brought such messages to his people, and the challenge in them lay very largely in their content which was first, last, and always Christ in some aspect of his life, death and resurrection. There is no greater challenge to the world today than that of the person of Jesus the Christ.

Secondly, the sermon should be delivered in plain language. Baxter said of preaching that "The plainest words are the most profitable oratory in the weightiest matters."<sup>26</sup> Concerning this same subject, G. B. Williamson, a General Superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene, has recently written (1952),

The profoundest truths are capable of expression in the simplest language. . . . Let every preacher of the gospel follow the example of the Master-Preacher in the use of simple and familiar words.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Gaines S. Dobbins, Building Better Churches (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1947), p. 139.

<sup>26</sup> Baxter, quoted by Orme in Practical Works, I, 490.

<sup>27</sup> G. B. Williamson, Overseers of the Flock (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1952), p. 72.

Not only should the message be challenging and clear, but it should also be delivered in much earnestness. Considerable discussion has already been given to the point that Baxter's preaching was characterized by an "intense earnestness." That some, including this investigator, hold that this still ought to be true is evident from the following which was also written by Williamson:

Earnestness in preaching is expected by everyone. No man who has accepted the responsibilities of this holy calling has any right to presume upon the credulity of men or trifle in matters that pertain to their eternal salvation. Every man who enters the pulpit should be in earnest, dead in earnest.<sup>28</sup>

Such earnestness will not come merely by trying to be that way. It must come instead as the result of some profound and unshakeable convictions--convictions which concern the essential nature of man and the ultimate reality of both heaven and hell. Nothing else can possibly take the place of these in bringing the pastor to a heart-warming, soul-stirring, will-challenging earnestness in not only his preaching but every aspect of his pastoral work.

Holy example. No matter how good the message, if it is not backed by a blameless life it will be worse than no message at all. The absolute necessity that the life of

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 76.



every true minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ be a holy example is so plainly obvious as to hardly require even the mentioning. Yet how many today, even as in Baxter's time, continue to live "offensively and impenitently," doing those very things which they condemn in others. As was noted previously in this report,<sup>29</sup> Baxter was so profoundly concerned at this point that a very large portion of his The Reformed Pastor was devoted to this aspect of the ministerial work, which he scripturally referred to as "taking heed to one's self." The details of this are not required here, but the necessity of it is no whit less today than it was then. Concerning this F. Lincicome has very recently written (1952) in The Christian Minister magazine, that "The duty of self-examination is one that is sadly neglected and were it practiced more, there would be much more individual holiness and happiness."<sup>30</sup> Concerning the necessity of setting a good example R. T. Williams has written, "Too much cannot be said concerning the importance of a preacher's character. What he is stands out so prominently that it has a pronounced

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<sup>29</sup> Supra, p. 56.

<sup>30</sup> F. Lincicome, "Self-examination," The Christian Minister, 4:10, October, 1952.

effect upon everything he says."<sup>31</sup>

The above is not meant to imply that the pastor's necessity is met in merely being a good example morally, but rather that he must set the example in all phases of his life. This includes such important matters as his private devotional life, his private family life, his use of leisure time, his industriousness in his work, and many, many others. It includes quite actually every phase of his life and work, for in everything he is setting an example, willingly or otherwise, for someone else who looks to him either admiringly, neutrally, or critically.

William Orme, in the final paragraph of his "The Life and Times of Richard Baxter," wrote as follows concerning Baxter's life as a holy example:

. . . while I would do honour to the man, and justice to his talents; while I would speak in the strongest terms of his genius and his eloquence; while I would venerate him as the leader of the noble army of Nonconformist confessors, whose labours and sufferings have secured for them a deathless renown, I would above all contemplate him as the MAN OF GOD, strong in the faith, rich in the fruits of love, and adorned with the beauties of holiness. In these respects he had probably few equals, and no superiors, even in an age when eminent characters were not rare. But what God did for him he can do for others; and what a world this might be, were every country furnished with but a few such men as RICHARD BAXTER.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> R. T. Williams, Pastor and People (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1939), p. 31.

<sup>32</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, I, 411-12.

Teaching. The Holy Scriptures teach that a "bishop" (of which Charles R. Erdman has written that "The nearest parallel in modern days to this office is that of the 'pastor, . . .")<sup>33</sup> not only "must be above reproach," but that he must also be "apt to teach" as well.<sup>34</sup> As has been shown earlier in this report,<sup>35</sup> Baxter placed very great emphasis on his mission as a teacher, so much so in fact that it was noted that even his pulpit ministry was considered by him to be a means of teaching his people. And naturally that was exactly what he was doing in his specific work of "instruction and catechizing." Baxter's people in general were abysmally ignorant in almost all things when he began to teach and instruct them, but it is quite certain that when he left Kidderminster the majority of them were well able to give "reason for the hope that was within them," and knew more about their religion than they did anything else except their daily employments. He took very seriously Christ's command to all ministers to "feed my sheep."

How much there needs to be a return to a definite

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<sup>33</sup> Charles R. Erdman, An Exposition, The Pastoral Epistles of Paul (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, MCMXXIII), p. 38.

<sup>34</sup> 1 Timothy 3:2, RSV, op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> Supra, p. 97.

teaching ministry is evident from the following which Louis and Malcolm Sweet recently reported as having come from the "Minutes of 1946 of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., Part II."

In this indictment of the Church for its lackadaisical answer to our Lord's direct command, 'Feed my lambs, the shepherds of the flock cannot escape their full share. The report on which we have been commenting quotes from an article with the ominous title, 'When the Clergy Abdicates, ' by J. Paul Williams, which affirms that 687 ministers reported to the Institute of Social and Religious Research that they spend less than 5 per cent of their time on the educational work of the Church or 'little more than they have to give to janitorial service.'

The Report goes on: 'One hundred and fifty-three urban ministers who kept careful tract of their time for a typical week averaged just over 3 per cent of their hours working at educational tasks.'<sup>36</sup>

Now is this condition restricted to the Presbyterians, for in the same book the Sweets affirm that

. . . the whole undertaking of Christian education is under fire from all sides, and it is freely asserted that in the Protestant Church we have reared a generation of religious illiterates.<sup>37</sup>

The need is thus apparent, even as it was to Baxter in his time, and the modern pastor will do exceedingly well to emulate the concern for and interest in religious education

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<sup>36</sup> Louis Matthews Sweet and Malcolm Stuart Sweet, The Pastoral Ministry in our Time (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, MCMXLIX), p. 76.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

were so characteristic of Baxter's ministry. Concerning this Sweet and Sweet have written,

This report, with its references, carries with it the most severe indictment of ministers we have ever read, and, as members of the ministerial order, we call on ourselves to repent in dust and ashes. The main thing, however, is to do something about it. One thing . . . is to recall the pastors of the Church to an adequate sense of their responsibility for a teaching ministry according to their divine commission.<sup>38</sup>

The above is not to imply that a return can be made in toto to the methods and techniques used by Baxter, for were such to be done the results would probably be almost uniformly poor. However, it does imply that the proper use of scriptural means adapted to the local situation (which this investigator maintains is what Baxter did) will again produce excellent results when carefully, diligently, and lowingly applied. Sweet and Sweet made a statement as follows with which this investigator is heartily in accord. They wrote,

Our purpose here is to urge the restoration of teaching to its pristine place in the life of the pastor. He should be teacher as well as preacher--a teaching preacher--and his function as teacher should not be entirely siphoned off into any subsidiary leadership whatever, in spite of his need of help.<sup>39</sup>

Family religion and teaching. Not only was Baxter

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

vitaly interested in teaching as such, but he was particularly concerned with the matter of religion being taught on a family basis and in the homes as a regular thing. This has been discussed in some detail previously,<sup>40</sup> thus the fact is merely noted here. However, it is important to consider that he not only did recognize the importance of the family in the religious life and nurture of his parishioners, but he also took effective action to do something about it.

In this the modern pastor can do no better than to emulate Baxter in recognizing the need and taking action to meet it. This is particularly pertinent today because the importance of the home in religion is again coming to its rightful place in the forefront of religious agencies. Thus Ralph Schuman has reported,

'The future of our church and of our country,' said the late Dr. Walter A. Maier, 'depends under God, upon stalwart Christian homes, consecrated Christian families, the exaltation of Christian doctrines concerning marriage, parenthood, and home.'<sup>41</sup>

On this same topic Clarence Fretz in a recent article has reported,

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<sup>40</sup> Supra, pp. 96 f.

<sup>41</sup> Ralph Schuman, "Whom God Hath Joined Together," Herald of Holiness, 42:14, March 11, 1953.

An examination of both Old and New Testaments reveals that the home is the principal, if not almost the sole agency for the religious education of children.<sup>42</sup>

Continuing on the same subject he wrote further that,

Henry F. Cope wrote, 'It is high time to take seriously the task of educating people to religious efficiency in the home.' The editors of his book said significantly: 'Central in religious education is the life of the family.' Farther on, Cope asserts that since the family is 'educational in function and religious in character, . . . it is essentially an institution for religious education.'<sup>43</sup>

Great numbers of additional witnesses might be added, but these are held sufficient for the purpose of stressing the fact that religion and religious training in the home are an increasingly important aspect of the pastor's responsibility in the proper oversight of the flock committed to his care.

Discipline. Not only has the teaching aspect of the ministry been largely overlooked today, but even more so is this the case with church discipline. This latter has apparently always been a difficult matter in the church in that it presents problems which are peculiar to it and render its application not only difficult, but liable to much abuse.

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<sup>42</sup> Clarence Fretz, "The Home an Agency for Christian Education," The Christian Ministry, 5:210, October-December, 1952.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

Thus, in Baxter's day, while scandalous sinners were allowed to go completely unchallenged, those who sought to live pure, holy, unblameable lives were sought out when necessary and punished by the ecclesiastical courts as "schismatics" and "dissenters." Thus, Baxter wrote,

In all my life I never lived in the parish where one person was publicly admonished, or brought to public penitence, or excommunicated, though there were never so many obstinate drunkards, whoremongers, or vilest offenders. . . . Whereupon those that pleaded for discipline were called by the new name of the Disciplinarians; as if it had been a kind of heresy to desire discipline in the church. . . . If a man, as he read a chapter to his family, and persuaded them to observe and practice it, and with any reasons urged them thereto, this was called expounding, and was inquired of in their articles, to be presented together with adultery, and such like sins; so also was he used that had no preaching at home, and would go to hear a comfortable preacher abroad. So that multitudes have I known exceedingly troubled or undone for such matters as these, when not one was much troubled for scandalous crimes.<sup>44</sup>

Though no such blunt statement has been found by the investigator with regards to discipline today, it is general knowledge that many of the churches do indeed include many scandalous sinners among their members, and that these do many times hold office within the church and Sunday School organizations (this being a known fact with regard to the investigator's own home church of a few years ago). In spite of the existence of such flagrant and unrepentant

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<sup>44</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, XIV, 145-46.



offenders, however, the common attitude has been well expressed by Kemp in his recent book, A Pastoral Triumph, wherein he has written, "Of course many of Baxter's methods and procedures are no longer applicable. Certainly no pastor would use public reproof as a policy of church discipline."<sup>45</sup> Further evidence of this almost-complete, present-day disregard for church discipline was seen in the fact that not one of the many recent books consulted by the investigator on the work of the minister or pastor gave so much as a chapter, or even a brief section of a chapter, to a discussion of this aspect of the minister's task. However, one important, though brief statement was made by Wayne E. Oates suggesting that new members be more thoroughly prepared so as to result in a "stronger" membership in the church. He wrote as follows:

Heretofore, the standards of New Testament church life have been forgotten in the competitive bid for more and more 'joiners.' Careful preparation and personal counseling of new members in a church will result in fewer but stronger members.<sup>46</sup>

This, however, is not to be confused with the problem

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<sup>45</sup> Charles F. Kemp, A Pastoral Triumph, The Story of Richard Baxter & his Ministry at Kidderminster (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), p. 88.

<sup>46</sup> Oates, op. cit., p. 73

of discipline with relation to regular church members--it is merely a recognition that the problem is a pressing one and that as a start this is a long-term way of doing something to help relieve the situation. The teachings of Scripture are, however, much more explicit. "The New Testament enjoins upon the church the duty of exercising discipline over its members. This is enforced as a positive command."<sup>47</sup>

In accordance with the unassailable validity of this statement, every church manual consulted gave directions for the administration of matters of church discipline. In some of these no more than general principles were set forth in little more than bare outline; whereas in some others, e.g., the Discipline of the Methodist Church, 1948, twenty-nine pages are devoted to the treatment of this subject.<sup>48</sup> In every case there was evidenced a three-fold objective for church discipline which was basically as follows: (1) to save the offender; (2) to save others who might be tempted into sin or corrupted by the example of those already guilty; and (3) to vindicate the honor and character of the

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<sup>47</sup> A New Baptist Church Manual (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1895), p. 43.

<sup>48</sup> Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Church, 1948 (Nashville et al.: The Methodist Publishing House, 1948), pp. 209-37.

church. Thus, it is not for the lack of proper authority or instructions to do this work that church discipline is so widely neglected today, but it is rather for other causes which are outside the province of this investigation.

From the above discussion it is evident that there is definite need for a return to the practice of scripturally based church discipline. This implies that essentially the same elements as found in Baxter's application of church discipline should be put in force today. These were, as has been discussed earlier,<sup>49</sup> (1) private reproof by an individual or the pastor; (2) reproof in the presence of a few witnesses; (3) public reproof before the entire church or its representative body, and (4) ejection from the communion of the church. In each instance the offender would be admonished to repentance, and upon acceptable evidence of having done so he would be restored again to the fellowship and communion of the church. Such was found to be effective in the New Testament church; Baxter found it be effective in his day; and the investigator holds, in agreement with the published manuals of many protestant denominations, that it will still be effective today when applied in accordance with scriptural principles and practices.

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<sup>49</sup> Supra, pp. 129 ff.

Visitation of the sick. In addition to those matters already discussed there are several other factors in which the modern pastor would do well to emulate Baxter. One of these is in making use of certain of the principles which he employed in his ministry to the sick. As was noted earlier,<sup>50</sup> Baxter stressed the necessity of calling immediately upon those who were sick or injured in order to prepare them for either a "fruitful life or a happy death." Although the first part of this treatment (namely hurrying to the sick) is receiving much attention in the literature today, there still quite generally is the feeling that the pastor is to stay clear of stressful material when dealing with the sick. This of course precludes the possibility of dealing with him about the eternal welfare of his soul, as no more stressful subject could hardly be brought to his attention. In accordance with this, Cabot and Dicks report that many doctors do not want the pastor to do anything which will alarm the patients.<sup>51</sup> In accordance with this view the object of sick visitation has been stated by them (Cabot and Dicks) to be as follows:

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<sup>50</sup> Supra, p. 103.

<sup>51</sup> Richard C. Cabot and Russell L. Dicks, The Art of Ministering to the Sick (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), p. 47.

The chief object of a visit is to make the sufferer feel that somebody cares about him, if possible that many people, his neighbors and friends, care about him and are interested in all that concerns him. The minister can carry this further, if anyone can, by making the patient realize that God cares for him, suffers in his suffering, understands it, and plans for him in sickness as in health.<sup>52</sup>

There is no hint here of ascertaining that the sick person is ready if necessary to face death and the Judgment.

John Watson was much nearer the point when he wrote many years ago that,

There is one occasion when the pastor never hesitates nor delays. As soon as the message comes from the house of sickness he leaves his bed or his book, or his food or his fireside, and loses no time on the way.

On the way the pastor recalls all he knows of this person, if he be of his flock, and arranges how he will declare Christ to him; for this must be his message.<sup>53</sup>

In a similar vein Andrew Blackwood has more recently written,

The parish minister gives priority to the sick and the dying.

The pastor enters the room as the physician of the soul. If he wishes to reap a spiritual harvest, both on earth and in heaven, he engages in what the Lutherans term 'Seelsorge.' That means the cure, or the care, of the soul.<sup>54</sup>

From the above discussion it is evident that the

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>53</sup> John Watson (Ian Maclaren) The Cure of Souls (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1896), p. 233.

<sup>54</sup> Blackwood, op. cit., p. 102.

pastor has a very definite, real, and immediate concern with and duty towards the sick. Not only should he, in emulation of Baxter, go to them as soon as knowledge of their sickness has been received, but he should also go as a minister of Christ and should thus take such steps as he believes are necessary to insure the soul's welfare of the one who is ill. For should the patient die unreconciled to God, his "blood" might well be upon the minister's hands when the day of ultimate reckoning finally comes.

Ministry to the poor. As has been shown earlier,<sup>55</sup> Baxter carried on a very extensive ministry to the poor. This was characterized by the utmost liberality in giving to those in need regardless of their being either good or bad. He also gave large numbers of Bibles and religious books, pamphlets and tracts to those among the poor who were unable to purchase them. In cases where he was not able to purchase them, then he sought out some of the more wealthy members whom he would entreat to buy them as a good work. Concerning this liberality to the poor his instructions to others were to "stretch your purse to the utmost" in doing good to the poor.

As for the pastor's ministry to the poor today, no

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<sup>55</sup> Supra, pp. 99 ff.

information was found concerning it directly in either recent books or periodicals. This is probably because of the vast increase in the number of welfare and relief organizations of all kinds which have arisen during the past twenty to thirty years. These have, rightly or wrongly (but mostly through the result of default), effectively removed most of this type of work from the province of the church, or pastoral care, and given it into the hands of secular agencies. Thus, the minister's task with regard to the poor has now become largely a matter of referral to the appropriate agency. In view of the existing situation this seems to be the most reasonable and correct thing to be done. However, in those cases where referral is found to be either impracticable or impossible, the minister's duty in cases of genuine need is crystal clear--he must assist insofar as he possibly can. For he who is a Christian pastor in deed, and not in name only, will certainly wish to ultimately hear the voice of his Lord saying,

'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Matthew 25:34-36, RSV, op. cit.

Concerning this aspect of the ministry, Daniel P. Kidder wrote in 1871, that

While every pastor ought to be charitable, and esteem it a privilege to give to the poor to the extent of his ability, yet no one can be expected to be able personally to relieve all the physical necessities of a congregation or a community. But, even if he could, it would be wrong for him to monopolize a duty which the great Head of the Church has devolved upon all its members in their proper measure. It is essentially important, therefore, that every pastor should cooperate with his congregation in raising funds for this object, and that he have arrangements with the proper officers of his Church by which he can draw at discretion upon the funds provided or secure their immediate co-operation in affording the needed assistance.<sup>57</sup>

Concerning the work of the church itself with the poor, the following two excerpts have been taken from the manuals of the Methodist and Presbyterian churches respectively:

[The Board of Stewards is] 17. To arrange for the visitation of strangers in the community and the members of the congregation who may be ill or in distress.<sup>58</sup>

II. Let the time after the solemn services of the congregation in public are over, be spent in . . . visiting the sick; relieving the poor; and in performing such like duties of piety, charity, and mercy.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Daniel P. Kidder, The Christian Pastorate: its Character, Responsibilities, and Duties (Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden, 1871), pp. 477-78.

<sup>58</sup> Methodist Discipline, op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>59</sup> The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. . . (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work, 1923), p. 440.



Patience. This is the last topic which has been treated in this discussion because it is the thing which brings success in pastoral work after all others have failed. Kemp has written concerning this,

Of all the qualities necessary for pastoral care none is more essential than patience. It has been said that as many men fail in pastoral work from a lack of patience as from any one thing.<sup>60</sup>

Not only did Baxter exemplify this virtue to an unusual degree in his own life, and especially so in view of his continual bad health, severe persecutions, and many trying controversies, but he also early recognized the absolute necessity of it in the ordinary pastoral work of the minister. Thus he wrote in The Reformed Pastor,

Another necessary concomitant of our work is Patience. We must bear with many abuses and injuries from those that we are doing good for. When we have studied for them, and prayed for them, and besought and exhorted them with all condescension, and spent ourselves for them, and given them what we are able, and dealt with them as if they had been our children, we must look that many should requite us with scorn, and hatred, and contempt, and cast our kindness in our faces with disdain, and take us for their enemies because we tell them the truth; and that the more we love, the less we shall be beloved.<sup>61</sup>

Not a very attractive picture of the future to present to young men just entering upon their ministry, but a

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<sup>60</sup> Kemp, A Pastoral Triumph op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>61</sup> Baxter, Practical Works, XIV, 130.

true one nonetheless. As Roy S. Nicholson has recently written, "Pastoral work requires that one possess almost inexhaustible patience, long-suffering, and tenderness."<sup>62</sup> And for similar reasons William F. Rogers in "The Heavy Laden," in Spann's Pastoral Care, listed together "Love, Faith, and Patience" as among the requirements for performing an adequate ministry to the "heavy-laden."<sup>63</sup> Also, in the "Index" of this same book,<sup>64</sup> Spann listed six separate references to the item of "Patience," thus giving additional evidence as to the importance of this matter in the work of pastoral care.

### III. SUMMARY

The object of this chapter has been to make a survey of those factors involved in Baxter's concept and practice of pastoral care which are maintained to be applicable, and necessary, to the practice of pastoral care today. No attempt was made to consider minor points and trivial details,

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<sup>62</sup> Roy S. Nicholson, "The Pastoral Ministry, Part II," Preacher's Magazine, 25:43, January-February, 1950.

<sup>63</sup> William F. Rogers, "The Heavy Laden," J. Richard Spann, editor, Pastoral Care, (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, MCMLI), p. 143.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 269.

but only those things were considered which are of recognized importance.

The first division of the chapter was devoted to a consideration of a brief comparison of the times, then and now, and also of the essentially-unchanging basic needs of mankind, of which the spiritual needs of conversion, sanctification, and edification are the Christian minister's particular and paramount concern.

The second division has dealt with those important factors which were found to be prominent in Baxter's ministry and which the modern Christian minister would do well to emulate in essence if not in their accidents. Outstanding among these were several factors relating to the pastor's personal life such as singleness of purpose, faith in God, love for souls, and his devotion to the work; and those relating to the methodology of his work such as orderly planning, person-centeredness, holy example, earnest preaching, religious education, family religion, and the use of discipline in the church.

The next aspects treated were those dealing with some applicable points from Baxter's practice of sick visitation and of his treatment of the poor and needy.

The chapter was concluded with a discussion of patience because that is the thing which not only must be

used throughout all phases of the minister's work, but often it is the only thing which will ultimately bring success.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### I. SUMMARY

The purpose of this investigation has been to make an intensive study of the concept and application of pastoral care as exemplified in the life and ministry of Richard Baxter of Kidderminster, and to relate these findings to the field of pastoral care today.

To accomplish this purpose the following steps were taken. First a careful study was made of his life and times with special consideration being given to those things which were found to have been particularly important in having influenced his character and ministry. Next his pertinent writings were investigated to secure data relative to his concept and practice of pastoral care. Lastly the more important of the findings in the above were evaluated in the light of current needs in the field of pastoral care and suggestions and recommendations were made in accordance with their applicability to that field today.

It was found that Baxter's early life had a very profound effect on his subsequent ministry. This was particularly true with regard to the effects of the lack of suitable

religious nurture from the ecclesiastical authorities in his youth, and the deepening and strengthening of his faith in God through a number of providential deliverances from serious injury or probable death. The very important influence of Baxter's seriously weakened and constantly painful bodily condition was also noted--"He preached as never sure to preach again, and as a dying man to dying men."

His concept of pastoral care was found to have been exceedingly broad--so much so, in fact, that it included every aspect of the work of the Christian minister. Basically, it consisted in three separate, though interrelated, duties, namely: (1) taking heed to himself; (2) taking heed to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit had made him the overseer; and (3) feeding the church of God.

In the practice of pastoral care it was found that Baxter was motivated by one all-inclusive purpose--"the gaining of souls to Christ." In doing this he concentrated most of his efforts into a few essential emphases--awakening preaching, holy example, instruction with catechising, and the faithful and impartial administration of discipline. He was noted for all four of these, and, with regard to the latter two, his ministry was almost unique in that he laid such great stress upon them. His ministry was found to have been essentially person-centered--a great advantage over the

usual ministry of his day--with special interest being placed on the matter of family religion. He was firmly convinced that no reformation could be either very effective or of long duration unless at the same time there was a current family-reformation. In order to effect this he devoted a major share of his time to matters which were primarily concerns of religious education. Even his preaching he considered to be but a means of teaching his people. And of course this was the main thrust of his catechetical work, as it was also in the case of his private meetings. His was without doubt one of the most education-minded ministries in the history of the church.

It was also found that he carried on an especially effective ministry to the sick and needy who always found in him a ready and helpful friend.

## II. CONCLUSIONS

In the pastoral ministry today it would naturally be illogical and unreasonable to expect to duplicate Baxter's methods and practices in toto. Our times are too vastly different in many ways from his for such a thing to be practicable. Nevertheless it was found that many of his attitudes, concepts, and methods are in general eminently suited for use today. This is true largely because he

always sought to do things on a scriptural basis, which is a sound one for any day and age as has been proven again and again.

Among the more important of these things which it was found that the modern pastor would do well to emulate were Baxter's singleness of purpose, strong faith in God, deep and consuming love for souls, complete devotion and dedication to his work, and great patience in carrying out that work. Further, it was found that in methodology he would do well to emulate Baxter's practice of orderliness, comprehensive planning, person-centeredness, and laying most of his emphasis on the essentials of earnest preaching, holy example, religious education, and family religion.

Also it was found that there should be a return to a ministry to the sick more in keeping with that practiced by Baxter. This is especially true with regard to the fact that the minister's primary concern should be for the soul's eternal welfare as shown by helping the person to prepare for a fruitful life or a happy death. There are admittedly certain major difficulties involved in doing this today, but they should be overcome rather than allowed to reduce the plane upon which pastoral care of the sick is conducted.

In like manner it was found that there should also be a return to the practice of church discipline in accord-



ance with the same essential scriptural principles used by Baxter in that part of his work. There are recognizedly large difficulties facing this aspect of the pastoral ministry, but it is one which is enjoined in Scripture and provided for in each of the denominational manuals consulted by this investigator. Thus it must be considered as a necessary part of pastoral work even though it has been very largely neglected during recent years.

Baxter's ministry to the poor also received special consideration. In view of the fact that this ministry has now been largely taken from the church and placed in the hands of various secular relief and welfare agencies, the duty of the minister in this matter today is largely one of referral. However, in those cases of genuine need which cannot otherwise be met, the modern minister should again emulate Baxter, who would stretch his purse to the utmost for those in need about him.

In conclusion, it was found that the study of Baxter's life and ministry yielded a veritable treasury of suggestions relative to those things which are both useful and necessary to the minister of today who desires to be a true overseer of the church of God.

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